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TRACTS  
ON THE  
DOCTRINE  
OF THE  
HOLY TRINITY,  
AND ON THE  
NICENE AND ATHANASIAN CREEDS,  
BY

BISHOPS STILLINGFLEET AND BULL; DR WALLIS,  
LORD MONBODDOO, AND DR HORBERY;

WITH A  
DISQUISITION  
ON RATIONAL CHRISTIANITY,  
BY SOAME JENYNS, ESQ.

---

*To which is prefixed*  
AN INTRODUCTION  
TO THE  
DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY,  
AND TO THE

ATHANASIAN CREED,  
BY THE RIGHT REVEREND  
THOMAS BURGESS, D. D. F. R. S. & F. A. S.  
BISHOP OF ST. DAVID'S.

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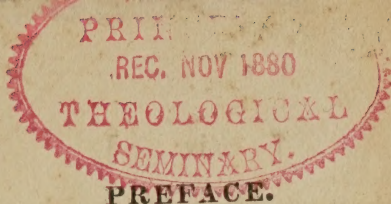
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“As the doctrine of the Trinity is a fundamental doctrine of the Christian religion, no man, who does not believe in the Trinity, can be said to be a Christian.”—LORD MONBODDO'S *Ancient Metaph.* vol. v. p. 189.

“I hope the reader will not think I have said too much upon a subject of such importance, as the doctrine of the Trinity, being the foundation of the Christian religion, and that which makes us Christians.”—IBID. vol. vi. p. 43.

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**I**N the following tracts the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, as professed by the primitive Church, and the Church of England, is stated by Bishop Bull, and illustrated by Dr Wallis, and Lord Monboddo. The ancient rules of this doctrine, the *Nicene*, and the *Athanasian* Creeds, are here also vindicated by Hooker, Bishops Stillingfleet and Bull, and by Dr. Horbery. The volume is closed by a disquisition of Soame Jenyns, on "rational Christianity," in which he very forcibly exposes the unreasonable objections of Unitarians, and the Antichristian character of Unitarianism.

The contents of the volume require no introduction: I shall therefore detain the reader, only to obviate two false assertions of Mr Belsham, (in which he calls HOOKER a *nominal* Trinitarian,\* and asserts, that what he himself calls a "truly Unitarian doctrine," re-

\* *Calm inquiry*, p. 520.



ceived the *marked approbation* of the UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD,)”† and to state the degree of authority, which is meant to be annexed to the *illustrations* of the great Doctrine, which is the subject of this volume. No one, who has ever read HOOKER, (the judicious,—the defender of our faith and liturgy,—the boast and ornament of the Church of England) or knows any thing of OXFORD, will give any credit to either of Mr Belsham’s assertions. The extract from the Ecclesiastical Polity, contained in this volume, and the language of the Oxford Decree, will shew how contrary to the truth are both his assertions. The decree was not a decree of *the University*, that is, of the University assembled in Convocation, but of the Vice-Chancellor and Heads of Houses; nor is there in it the *slightest mention* of any Unitarian doctrine. It passes a *censure* on some passages of Dr Sherlock’s Sermon, as contrary to the doctrine of the Catholic Church, and especially to the doctrine of the Church

† Calm inquiry, p. 519.



of England : “ *dissona et contraria doctrinæ Ecclesiæ Catholicæ, & speciatim doctrinæ Ecclesiæ Anglicanæ.*” \* Unitarianism is altogether contrary to the doctrine of the Church of England. How then was it possible, that the *censure* of opinions, which were stated to be *contrary* to the doctrine of the Church of England, should convey a *marked approbation* of “a truly Unitarian doctrine?” If Mr. Belsham has ever read the decree, he must know, that there is not one word in it expressive, either of *Unitarianism* or *approbation*. If, then, truth is not “necessarily the object of his aversion and abhorrence,” as he says of the established Clergy, his assertions respecting Hooker, and the University of Oxford, certainly betray no great regard for truth

That doctrine of the Church, which Unitarians hold in such “abhorrence,” Dr. Wallis and Lord Monboddo have shewn, is neither inconsistent with reason, nor philosophy. Their attempts to illustrate the mys-

\* The decree is printed in Dr. Sherlock’s *Modest Examination*.

teries of our faith are no concession to infidelity ; for both these learned writers rest the truth of the doctrine on the authority of Scripture ; and the latter maintains that it is the belief of this doctrine, which “makes us Christians,” and that “no man, who does not believe in the Trinity, can be said to be a Christian.” Such endeavours to illustrate the mysteries of revelation by natural analogies are countenanced by the example of St. Paul. The resurrection of the body is purely a doctrine of revelation ; yet St. Paul has shewn the reasonableness of our belief in it by a natural analogy. To the objection, “But some man will say, how are the dead raised up ? and with what body do they come ?” the Apostle replies, “Thou fool, that which thou sowest, is not quickened, except it die.” And though the analogy is not perfect, yet its similitude is sufficient to dispose the mind to acquiesce in the revealed doctrine. The Platonists of the second and third centuries were pre-disposed to Christianity by their knowledge of the Platonic Triad, how much soever the Pla-

tonic and Christian doctrines, in some respects, differ from each other. For, as I have said in the following pages (p. 65.) “the doctrine of the Trinity was not brought into the Church by the Platonists, but the Platonists were brought into the Church by the doctrine.” Evidence of analogy between the Christian and heathen Trinities we need not seek beyond the Triad of the Platonists; nor is it necessary, for the purpose of the proposed illustration, to prove any other affinity, except the *distinct existence*, and *co-eternity*, of three hypostases in one God.

I will take my leave of the reader with this single observation on the general subject. As two *heterogeneous* natures, material and immaterial, are so united, as to constitute one man; “why should it be thought a thing incredible,” that three *homogeneous* natures, (or hypostases, or whatever better name can be had,) should be so united, as to be only one God? If we did not know the fact, would not the former union be the more incredible of the two?

Durham, June 16, 1814.

T. St. DAVIDS.

## ERRATA.

- P. 56. i. 14. read *contenti*.  
P. 65. l. 13. read *nostri*.  
P. 71. l. 11. read *emperor and emanation*.  
l. 19. read *αποβήτοις*.  
P. 72. l. ult. read *κοσμον*.  
P. 96. l. 12. read *parallel*.  
P. 103. l. 4. read *προσωπον*.  
P. 124. l. 21. read *orthodox*.

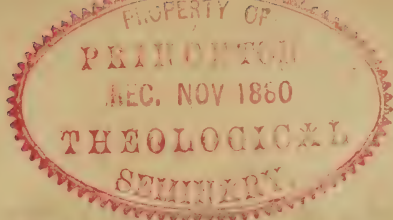


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AN INTRODUCTION  
TO THE  
DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY,  
AND TO THE  
ATHANASIAN CREED.

~~~~~  
Quod opus Evangelii, quæ est substantia Novi Testamenti, statuens legem & prophetas usque ad Johannem, si non exinde Pater & Filius & Spiritus, tres crediti, unum Deum sistunt? TERTULL. adv. Prax. c. xxxiii.

Principale munus scientiæ cognoscere Trinitatem, secundo vero in loco cognoscere creaturam ejus. ORIGEN, in Cant. Cant. Hom. ii.

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THE doctrine of the Trinity is the distinguishing tenet of Christianity, and the foundation of the Christian faith, all Christians being baptized in the name of the FATHER, and of the SON, and of the HOLY GHOST. It is the belief and profession of this faith, which makes us Christians, (for we are Christians, to use the words of Tertullian,

*credendo, quod creditum facit Christianos,)*  
and which therefore is necessary to our salvation.

If the distinction of names in the baptismal ordinance be a real distinction of Persons, it will appear in other parts of the Scriptures. We accordingly find it in Christ's promise to the Apostles, that "HE would send the HOLY GHOST from the FATHER;"\* in St. Paul's declaration that "we have access through CHRIST by one SPIRIT to the FATHER;"† and in the Apostolical benediction, "the grace of our Lord, JESUS CHRIST, the love of GOD, and the fellowship of the HOLY GHOST be with you all." What can mark personality more strongly than *grace*, *love*, and *fellowship*? or than the means of *access* to the Father? or than Christ's *sending* the Holy Ghost from the Father? And can Persons so united with the Almighty be other than God? than one God? for we know from the whole tenour of Scripture that there is only one God. It appears

\* John xv. 26

† Eph. ii. 8.



therefore from the baptismal ordinance, and from the other passages, that the great purpose of the Gospel was to make known the unity of the Godhead in the three divine Persons, the merciful and gracious authors of man's salvation. Tertullian calls the revelation of this faith, "the work of the Gospel, and substance of the new Testament."\*

If the distinction of names, FATHER, SON, and HOLY GHOST, be a real distinction of Persons, it will not be confined to the new dispensation ; it will be seen in the old Testament, as well as the new. What says the Scripture? The creation of the world is ascribed to GOD, to the WORD OF GOD, and to the SPIRIT OF GOD ; but especially to the WORD ; as the redemption of mankind is to the FATHER, the SON, and the HOLY GHOST ; but especially to the SON. The Word, or Son of God, was in both dispensations the visible representative of the Deity :

\* In the passage prefixed to this Introduction.

in the former, he was JEHOVAH MIMRA,\* in his intercourse with the Patriarchs and Prophets; in the latter he was the WORD INCARNATE; the Word, that, “in the beginning, was with God, and was God;” and “became flesh;”—“God manifest in the flesh;”—“in whom dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.”

The distinction and plurality of divine Persons expressed in the several passages of the new Testament, is also evident in the Mosaic description of the creation. Let us take for our text the words of Moses in their literal sense. “In the beginning Gods created the heaven and the earth.—The Spirit of the Gods moved upon the face of the waters.—And the Gods said, Let there be light.—And the Lord Gods said, Behold the man is become as one of us.” So in Ecclesiastes, “Remember thy CREATORS in the

\* It is the common opinion of all antiquity, says Dr. Clarke, that the Angel, who said, I am the God of thy Fathers, was Christ. (*Scripture Doctrine.* p. 114.—118.)

days of thy youth.”\* Considering the heavy denunciations in Scripture against idolatry, is it credible, that the divine name would have been expressed in the plural form, if some *plurality*, consistent with *unity*, had not been intended? Against any misapplication or abuse of the plural form, the words of Moses are sufficiently guarded. For though a plurality of persons be expressed by the plural form of Elohim, yet the *unity* of the Godhead is equally denoted by the *singular* form of the verbs *created*, *said*, *saw*, &c. with which it is connected. There is the same peculiarity of expression in the words, “the Spirit of the Gods moved upon the face of the waters,” in which we have the *Spirit*, and not *Spirits*; and its verb also in the singular form; the third Person of the Godhead being the Spirit of the Father and the Son.

The creation was the work of the three Persons of the Godhead, yet the agency of

\* Chap. xii. 1.

the WORD ought, perhaps, more especially to be understood in those *enunciations* of the divine will, which are expressed in the passages; "AND GOD SAID, Let there be light;" —"Let us make man."—&c. as the presence of the HOLY SPIRIT is in the words, "the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters."

By these words, indeed, some expositors understand *a great wind*. But they do not explain why the *violent* agitation of the abyss should be more suitable to the work of creation, than the gentle influence of incubation, as the passage is commonly understood. We know that on another occasion there was "a great and strong wind,—but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake, a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire, a still small voice." The original terms for the *Spirit of God* (רוח אלחים) occur in many other passages of the Bible, but no where in the sense, which



Unitarians ascribe to this passage. And the reason seems to be, that the term רוח, in construction with any thing intellectual, can never signify an inanimate substance; and therefore in construction with אלהים can mean only the *Spirit of God*. It ought also to be observed, that רוח אלהים cannot mean a “great wind,” because it is introduced before the commencement of the Creation of our mundane System, and consequently (wind being a created substance) before the existence of wind. The first act of the Creation was the production of Light.† A great wind is called רוח גזירה and רוח גביר. In a passage of Job, which relates to the work of the creation, the *Spirit of God* is equivalent to the *Spirit of the Almighty*. “The Spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life.” (xxxiii. 4.)

† The first verse of Genesis gives the *general subject* of Creation; the second describes the *unformed mass* of Chaos created by God out of nothing; the third, the first act of Creation from this “rudis indigestaque moles” into the *substances and forms* of inanimate and animated nature.

The works of creation and redemption, and the resurrection of Christ are ascribed to each of the three Persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, because the three Persons are one God.

The Spirit of God is one with God ; and the Spirit of Christ is one with Christ ; and therefore as the Spirit of Christ is one with the Spirit of God, (Rom. viii. 9, 10, 11.) the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are one and the same God : one God in three Persons.

The doctrine of a plurality of Persons in the Godhead, was not confined to Christians ; it was known to the Egyptians, and to the Greeks : which can be accounted for only in two ways ; either that the doctrine in Egypt and Greece, was derived from revelation, that is, from the Hebrew Scriptures, which was probably the fact ; or from the investigations of a profound philosophy. If from the former source, the doctrine ought to be above all dispute ; if from the latter,\*

\* The doctrine of THREE IN ONE, and ONE IN THREE.

that may well be allowed to be free from absurdity and contradiction, which was professed by the wisest philosophers from Plato to Plotinus.

I will not here anticipate from the following pages, any of the observations\* on the analogy between the three hypostases of the Platonists, and the Christian Trinity of Persons in the Godhead, any further than to remark the resemblance between the *ψυχή του κόσμου*, the animating Spirit of the World, and the third Person of the Holy Trinity, as described in the Nicene Creed; where he is called, “the Lord and giver of Life,”—life natural and spiritual,—a title, which is founded on the influence of the Holy Spirit in the creation of the world, (Gen. i. 2.) in the miraculous conception, in the resurrection of Christ from the dead, and in the general resurrection, (Rom. viii. 11.) What Moses says of God, Job ascribes to the

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\* By Bishop Stillingfleet, Lord Monboddo, and Dr. Hales, included in a Volume of Tracts on the Doctrine of the Trinity, to which this *Introduction* is prefixed.

Spirit of God. " And the Lord God formed man out of the dust, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of *Life*". (Gen. ii. 7.) " The Spirit of God hath made me, and the breath\* of the Almighty hath given me *Life*". (Job. xxxiii. 4.) The creation being the work of all the Persons of the Godhead, is ascribed severally to each, and singly to God.

The terms, Father and Son, imply some subordination of one to the other ; and because a *human* Son is necessarily subordinate *in time* to his Father ; some unbelievers in the Trinity have supposed, that the Son of God was subordinate *in time* to the Father, judging of things human and divine, that is, of things infinitely dissimilar, by the same rule ; (though our Saviour had warned us of the difference : " If I have told you of earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things ?"†) and not recollecting, that every thing in the divine nature must be instant

\* *Breath* and *Spirit*, (*spiritus*,) are equivalent terms.

† John iii. 12.



and eternal, and therefore cannot admit of succession and subordination. If then it can be proved from Scripture, that the Son and the Holy Spirit possess any one attribute of the divine nature, such as omnipresence, they must have possessed it from all eternity ; and so the Father never could have been without the Son ; nor the Father and Son without the Holy Spirit. The unity of the three persons in one God follows both from the truth of Scripture, and from the impossibility that there should be more than one omnipresent and infinite Being.

Tertullian says, *Unitas irrationaliter collecta hæresin facit ; & trinitas rationaliter expensa veritatem constituit.\** To obviate the opposite errors into which, irrational and unscriptural views of the divine attributes have led some unbelievers in the Trinity, the Church has adopted, as an explication of the Christian faith, the Creed of St. Athanasius, so called either because it was written by him, or contains such an exposi-

\* *Adversus Praxeam*, c. 3.

tion of our faith, as may be collected from his works. He lived early in the *fourth* Century. Before therefore I proceed to an account of the Athanasian Creed, I shall subjoin a selection of passages from the Fathers of the *three first* Centuries, in which the doctrines of Christ's Divinity, and of the Holy Trinity, are professed.

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## CENTURY I.

CLEMENS ROMANUS. A. D. 65.—83.

“The sceptre of the majesty of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, came not in pomp and splendour, although he was able to assume them, but in lowliness of mind.”\* (p. 8.)

\* The passages here selected may be found in most of the writers, who have opposed the Arian, and Socinian, or Unitarian, heresies, such as Pearson, Bull, Waterland, Abraham Taylor, Bingham, Randolph, Burgh, &c. But by the pages which I have placed at the end of each passage, (if not otherwise described) I refer to BURGH'S *Inquiry into the opinions of Christians of the three first Centuries*, which is a very valuable storehouse of Christian testimonies, and ought to be reprinted.

ST. BARNABAS. A. D. 50.

“ Christ, the Lord of the whole earth, to whom (God) said before the appointment of time, Let us make man in our image after our likeness.” Gen. i. 36. (p 15.)

HERMAS, A. D. 70.

“ The Son of God is more ancient than any creature, (Colos. 1. 15.) insomuch that he was in council with the Father, upon the subject of Creation. (p. 17.)

“ The name of the Son of God is great and without bound ; and the whole world is upheld by him.” (p. 17.)

CENTURY II.

IGNATIUS. A. D. 101.

“ I glorify Jesus Christ, the God, who hath filled you with wisdom :”—“ God clothed in flesh :”—(p. 20, 21.)

“ I pray that you may be, in every respect, confirmed in your God, Jesus Christ.” (p. 21, 22.)

## POLYCARP. A. D. 147.

“For this, and for all things else I praise thee, I bless thee, I glorify thee, through the eternal high Priest, Jesus Christ, thy beloved Son, through whom to thee, with him in the Holy Ghost, be glory both now and to all succeeding ages.” (p. 54.)

## JUSTIN, MARTYR. A. D. 164.

“David hath proclaimed Christ to be born from the womb according to the council of the Father, and hath shewn him to be a mighty God, and to be worshipped.” (p. 90.)

“From which I would have you to know, that this same crucified Person is explicitly declared to be both God and man,—that he is both the Christ and adorable God; that the Holy Ghost has called him God; and that, by what has been already laid down, it has been abundantly demonstrated, that Christ, the Son of God, is God and Lord.” (p. 93.)



“ We worship and adore Him, and his Son, (who came from him, and taught us these things,)—and the Prophetic Spirit.” (Whitaker’s Origin of Arianism, p. 278.).

IRENÆUS. A. D. 167.

“ And to this purpose our Lord, in these later times, came to us, not so as he might have come, but so as we might be able to behold him : for he might have come to us in his own unspeakable glory, but we should have been unable to bear the majesty of his glory : for he is the word of God, the only begotten of the Father, Jesus Christ our God.” (p. 113.)

“ Thou art not unmade, O Man, nor didst thou always co-exist with God, as his own Word has done.” (Bull’s answer to Clerke. p. 938.)

ATHENAGORAS. A. D. 177.

“ By him and through him were all things made, the Father and Son being one, the Son being in the Father, and the Father in

the Son, in the unity and power of the Spirit." (p. 63.)

"We profess God, and the Son his Word, and the Holy Ghost, and that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost are truly one, as concerning power." (p. 66.)

TATIAN. A. D. 177.

"We speak not foolishly, O Greeks, nor do we utter trifles, when we declare to you, that God was born in the form of a man." (p. 99.)

THEOPHILUS. A. D. 182.

—"Types of the Trinity, that is of God, and his Word, and his Wisdom." (p. 129.)

"By his Word and his Wisdom he founded the universe; for by his Word and his Spirit the heavens were established." (p. 140.)

CLEMENS ALEXAND. A. D. 192.

"O man, believe on him, who is man

and God ;—O all men, trust in him, who alone is God of all men ;—receive light, that ye may know him to be both God and Man.” (p. 162.)

“ A Trinity indivisibly divisible, in whom dwelleth the universally superintendant power of God.” (p. 170.)

“ The only begotten Son is the only God.” (p. 176.)

“ He can want nothing, who has the Word, the Almighty God, *τον παντοκράτορα Θεον Λογον.*” (Bull’s Answer to Clerke, p. 935).

TERTULLIAN. A. D. 194—212.

“ What is the purpose, what the substance of the new Testament, but to teach us, that the Three in whom we believe, the Father, and the Son, and the Spirit, are one God ?” (p. 225.)

“ The Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are three, not in dignity, but order ; not in substance, but form ; not in power, but manifestation ;\* but they are of one substance,

d

\* Lat. *specie*, i. e. *πιδειξις*, appearance, manifestation.

dignity, and power, because they are one God." (p. 212.)

"Christ is God; and he who adores him, should adore him in spirit and in truth." (p. 192.)

"So God made man, in the image of God created he him, that is, in the image of Christ; for the Word is God, who being in the form of God thought it not robbery to be equal with God." (p. 194.)

"But the washing away of offence is an acquisition made by faith, sealed and witnessed by the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. For if every word shall be established by three witnesses, how much stronger is the ratification of our hope, when three divine names are set to it; when we have the same to bear witness to our faith, who have promised and engaged for our salvation in consequence of it." (p. 195.)

"The names of the Father, God Almighty, the most High, the Lord of Hosts, the King of Israel, He who is, as the Scriptures teach us: these we say, belong to



the Son likewise, and that the Son came in these, and always acted in them, and so manifested them in himself to men. "All that the Father hath, saith he, is mine:" why then not his names? wherefore, when thou readest *Almighty God*, and *the most High*, and the *Lord of Hosts*, and the *King of Israel*, and *He who is*, consider whether the Son be not demonstrated hereby; who is, *in his own right*, God Almighty, as he is the Word of Almighty God." (Tertullian, adv. Prax. c. 17.)

## CENTURY III.

CAIUS A. D. 210.

"Psalms and Songs of the Brethren, written by the faithful from the beginning, celebrate the word of God, even Christ, declaring him to be God." (Hickes's account of Dr. Grabe and his MSS. p. lxi.)

ORIGEN. A. D. 254.

"When we come to the grace of baptism, we renounce all other Gods and Lords, and acknowledge one God alone, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost." (p. 275.)

“ There are some, indeed, who confess the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, but not sincerely, not truly ; such as all heretics, who confess the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, but not rightly, not faithfully. For they either falsely separate the Son from the Father, declaring the Father to be of one nature, and the Son of another ; or as falsely confound them, making God to be a compound of three, or a mere threefold appellation. But he who rightly declares the truth, will ascribe to the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, what is peculiar to each, without acknowledging any difference in nature or substance.” (p. 274.)

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The contrary heresies, which Origen has here discriminated, mutually produce each other. It became therefore in the next century necessary to guard the Catholic faith against these errors by a more minute ex-

plication of the truth. And this has been effected in

### THE ATHANASIAN CREED,

of which I shall now give a summary view.

We cannot be saved without a right faith ; and a right faith consists in believing God to be, as he is revealed to us in the Scriptures ; that is, in believing that there is only one God ; and that there are three Persons in the Godhead, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost ; and so to believe, as not to confound the three Persons into one Person, nor to distinguish them into three Gods.

The three Persons are uncreated, infinite,\* eternal, and almighty, and therefore each person is God and Lord ; yet they are not three Gods ; because the same Scriptures which ascribe to each the attributes of Deity, teach us also that there is only one God.

\* In the English translation of the Athanasian Creed, the term *incomprehensible* means *infinite* or *omnipresent*, that is, *qui nullo limite comprehendi, nullo finire, potest.*

But they are distinct Persons. For the Son being *of* the Father is therefore not the Father; and the Holy Ghost proceeding *from* the Father and the Son, is different from both; so that there is only one Father, one Son, and one Holy Ghost.

But though different from each other, one is not before or after another, greater or less than another; because all the three Persons are infinite, eternal, and almighty; and therefore, as there can be no degrees of infinity, one cannot be more infinite, more eternal, more almighty than another.

He therefore that would be saved, must thus think of the Trinity, that is, must believe that God is one in three Persons; and that the three Persons are one God; for thus is God revealed to us in the Scriptures.

It is further necessary to believe rightly the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ; that is, that Jesus Christ is not only the Son of God, the second Person of the Trinity, but that he is also man,—very God, and very Man;—God of God, being begotten of God



before the foundation of the world ; and man by the human nature, derived from his mother in the world ; equal to the Father in the several attributes of Deity before mentioned ; and inferior to the Father in his human nature : who is one Christ by the assumption of the human nature into the divine, in one person ; who died and rose again for our salvation ; and ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of the Father, God Almighty, from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. At whose coming all men shall rise again with their bodies ; and shall give account for their own works ; and they that have done good, shall go into life everlasting ; and they that have done evil, into everlasting fire. This is the Catholic faith, the faith of the Gospel, which except a man believe faithfully, he cannot be saved.

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Some persons have objected, that the term TRINITY is not in the Bible. It cer-

tainly is not to be found there any more than the terms *unity*, (applied to the attributes of God,) *omnipresence*, and *omniscience*. But no one will doubt, that these attributes are to be ascribed to the deity, on the authority of Scripture, because the before mentioned terms are not in the Bible. It is sufficient for the doctrines, that it is recorded in Scripture, that there is only *one* God, that he is *every where present*, and that he *knoweth all things*; and that there are **THREE**, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, possessing the attributes of *omnipresence* and *omniscience*.

But if the word **TRINITY** be not in the Bible, we have a strong argument for its primitive use and authority among Christians in its very high antiquity. The first Latin writer, who wrote on the Christian doctrines, as early as the latter end of the second and the beginning of the third Century, Tertullian, uses the word *Trinitas*, and, before him, Theophilus and Clemens Alexandrinus, the word *τριάς*, without any

intimation of either word being new to the Church. How soon after the general preaching of the Gospel the terms *Trinity*, *omnipresence*, and *omniscience*, were first used, cannot now be ascertained, nor is it of any consequence.

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NOTE.—P. xx. (l. 6. *Note*.)

“Mr Lindsey’s accusation of Unitarianism against all Christian people extending no farther than “till the council of Nice,” here also my enquiry into the tenets of the primitive Church shall find a termination. By that famous council, which was convened at Nice, a city of Bythinia, A. D. 325, and which, I trust, I have now redeemed from the insinuated charge of innovation, the opinions of Arius were absolutely condemned, and the very doctrines, which are at this day received by the Church of England, were ratified and promulged to the Christian world. How far those doctrines which were then promulged, and which are now embraced by the Church of England, accord with the gospel of Jesus Christ, and the faith of Ante-Nicene antiquity, it has been my Office to enquire and to communicate; and thus have I made it appear, not by a *single* exception only, that Mr. Lindsey’s *general* position is false, but by the testimony of *every Christian writer of the first three centuries*, that, without a single exception, the contradictory of his position is true.” (BURGH’S *Inquiry*, p. 380.)

P. xxi. l. 16 *I glorify Jesus Christ, the God, who hath filled you with wisdom.* Unbelievers in the Divinity of Christ, have often asserted that the term *θεος* is never applied, with the article, to Jesus Christ.

Though the assertion has been frequently refuted, yet, as long as the Unitarian heresy exists, the refutation cannot be too constantly maintained. Ignatius, who was a disciple of St. John, calls Christ ὁ Θεός in many passages, besides the one at the head of this note: as ἐν θεληματι τοῦ Πατρὸς, καὶ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, τοῦ Θεοῦ ἡμῶν. (Epist. ad Ephes. BURGH'S Inquiry, p. 22.) Ὁ Θεὸς ἡμῶν Ἰησοὺς Χριστός. (Epist. ad Ephes.) Ἐν Ἰησοῦ Χριστῷ τῷ Θεῷ ἡμῶν. (Epist. ad Rom.) Ὁ Θεὸς ἡμῶν Ἰησοὺς Χριστὸς ἐν πατρὶ ὧν. (Idem ibid) Μιμητὴν εἶναι τοῦ πατρὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ μου. (Idem ibid) So Justin Martyr: Ὁ λόγος τῆς Σοφίας, αὐτὸς ὡς οὗτος ὁ Θεός, ἀπὸ τοῦ Πατρὸς τῶν ὅλων γεννηθεὶς. (Dial. cum Tryph.) Τοῦτο—εἶπε—ὁ τοῦ Θεοῦ Λόγος, μνηνῶν ἡμῖν, ὃν ἐδήλωσε τὸν Θεὸν λέγειν. (Idem ibid) Ὁ δὲ ἡμετέρως ἰατρὸς Χριστὸς ὁ Θεός. (Idem, forsan, De Resurr.) These passages of Ignatius, and Justin Martyr, with many others, from Tatian, Theophilus, Irenæus, Melito, Clemens Alexandrinus, Hippolytus, Origen, and Dionysius Alexandrinus, the reader will find in ABRAHAM TAYLOR'S *True Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity*, vol. I. p. 276—278. London, 1727.

## A DEMONSTRATION

OF THE

### THREE GREAT TRUTHS OF CHRISTIANITY,

*That there is a God,—that there is only one God,—  
and that the three Persons, Father, Son, and  
Holy Ghost are one God.*



1. All things in the universe are matter or mind, material or immaterial.

2. Nothing material could have been the cause of its own existence ; for if it could, it would have acted, before it existed, which is impossible. There must then have been something prior to all creation, that is, something uncreated, uncaused, without beginning, self-existent, and eternal. The world therefore was created by a self-existent and eternal being.

Whatever proves design in the works of Creation, proves also the previous existence of a Designer or Creator. The *regular return* of the seasons ; the *structure* of animal bodies ; the means which every parent ani-



mal has for the support of her young, *in proportion to their number*; are proofs of design in the works of creation, and therefore prove that they were made by a Creator, that is, by an uncreated, uncaused, self-existent, and eternal Being.

3 But if eternal, that is, infinite in time, he must have been infinite in all attributes, in time, space, power, &c. that is, he must have been eternal, omnipresent, omnipotent, &c. otherwise he must have been both infinite and finite, which is impossible. And if infinite, then only one. For there cannot be two Beings possessing unlimited attributes.

If omnipresent, then only one. For there cannot be two infinite Beings: for the reason before mentioned. And as two finite bodies cannot occupy the same space, at one and the same time, so, we may conceive, two infinite and omnipresent Beings cannot occupy all space.

And if omnipotent, then also only one; for there cannot be two omnipotent Beings. Two Beings cannot be superior to each other

at the same time and in the same attribute : Neither can they be equal to each other, and be omnipotent. There cannot, therefore, be two infinite beings ; and consequently there can be only one God.

4. The Scriptures also declare, that there is only one God. But the same Scriptures declare that there are three omnipresent Persons ; and, as there cannot be two omnipresent Beings, the three omnipresent Persons can be only one God.

5. The distinct personality of the Three Persons is evident from many passages of Scripture ; from the Baptismal Commission, Christ's promise of the Holy Spirit, (John, xv. 26.) the Apostolical benediction, &c. The baptismal Commission, if not in the name of three divine *Persons*, would be in the name of *God*, of a *man*, and an *attribute*.

The omnipresence of the Son is proved from his promise to be with his Church to the end of the world,\* and from his hearing

\* Whether this be translated *the end of the world*, or *the end of the Jewish age*, makes no difference as to

our prayers. " This is the confidence we have in him, that if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us." (1 John v. 14.) His divinity is further evident from St. John's testimony, that in the beginning he was with God and was God;\* and from St. Paul, who calls him our great God and Saviour.†

The omnipresence of the Holy Spirit, is evident from his presence with believers in Christ throughout the world, who are called the temples of the Holy Spirit. His di-

the proof of *omnipresence*. For if Christ was every where present, at all times with all his disciples dispersed through different parts of the world during that age, he must be omnipresent in all ages. There can be no intermission of an infinite attribute.

\* St John's testimony to Christ's Divinity, and to his creation of the world, is acknowledged by Julian. (Cyril. contra Julian. p. 327.) And another Hea-then, Pliny, says that the Christians of the first Century paid divine worship to Christ, singing a hymn to Christ as to God, *carmen Christo, quasi Deo*.

† This interpretation of Tit. ii. 13. is required by the idiom of the original, and is supported by all the ancient Greek Fathers of the Church, and by all the Latin with one exception.

vinity is further evident from his omniscience, in leading the Apostles into all truth.

6. That the Scriptures which contain these doctrines, are a divine Revelation we prove from the character of the writers, and from the authenticity of their writings; and we establish that authenticity by the same means that the authenticity of all other writings is proved, but much more amply and certainly than any other ancient writings can be authenticated. For we have not only the testimony of writers contemporary with the Apostles, and an uninterrupted series of testimony from their time for three Centuries, which comprehended nearly one hundred and fifty writers, who, even in such of their writings, as are now extant, have quoted almost every verse of the New Testament: but we have also a Manuscript copy of the New Testament as ancient as the end of the second or beginning of the third Century; and other very ancient Manuscripts belonging to the fourth, fifth, sixth, and seventh Centuries.

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LORD MONBODDO'S *Ancient Metaph.* vol. v.

“ These three principles of the intellectual world, though distinct substances, make but one Being. And thus we have *the three in one*, and *the one in three*, and the unity of the Godhead perfectly preserved.”

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THE  
DOCTRINE  
OF THE  
CATHOLIC CHURCH,  
FOR THE FIRST  
THREE AGES OF CHRISTIANITY,  
CONCERNING THE  
BLESSED TRINITY.  
CONSIDERED,  
IN OPPOSITION TO  
SABELLIANISM AND TRITHEISM.

BY THE  
*RIGHT REV GEORGE BULL, D. D.*

Late Lord Bishop of St. David's.



## A DISCOURSE.\*

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THE unanimous sense of the catholic doctors of the church, for the first three ages of christianity, concerning the article of the Trinity, is in short this.

I. *That there are in the Godhead three (not mere names or modes, but) really distinct hypostases or persons, the Father, the Son or Word of God, and the Holy Ghost.*

II. *That these three persons are one God; which they thus explain.*

1. *There is but one fountain or principle of divinity, God the Father, who only is ~~author~~ God of, and from himself; the Son, and Holy Ghost deriving their divinity from him; the Son immediately from the Father,*

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\* Bishop Bull's Works, vol. 3. p. 323.

*the Holy Ghost from the Father and the Son, or from the Father by the Son.*

2. *The Son and Holy Ghost are so derived from the fountain of the divinity, as that they are not separate or separable from it, but do still exist in it, and are most intimately united to it.*

All the fathers insist upon this, that if there were more than one fountain of the divinity, or if the three persons were each of them a self-dependent principle of divinity, or if the three persons were separate from each other, then there would be three Gods. But being there is but one fountain of the divinity, the Father; the Son and Holy Ghost deriving their divinity from that fountain, and that so, as still to exist in it, and be inseparably united to it, there is but one God. That this is the unanimous consent, and constant doctrine of the primitive fathers, I have fully shewed in my *Defens. Fid. Nic.* I shall here resume, and more fully explain only one testimony which I have there alledged, because it

shews us what was then accounted *Sabellianism*, what *Tritheism*, and what the *Catholic doctrine concerning the blessed Trinity*; matters so hotly disputed among us at this day.

*Dionysius* Bishop of *Rome*, who flourished about the year 259, whom his great namesake of *Alexandria* stiles λόγιόν τε καὶ θαυμάσιον, *a learned and wonderful man*, in an epistle against the *Sabellians*, (which doubtless he wrote, as the manner then was, with the advice and consent of the clergy of his diocese, synodically convened) after he had refuted the doctrine of *Sabellius*, thus \* proceeds to discourse against the contrary heresy of those “ who divide and cut asunder, “ and overthrow the most sacred doctrine “ of the church of God, parting the monarchy into three certain powers and hypostases, separated from each other, and “ consequently into three deities. For I “ hear, that there are some catechists and

\* *Apud Athan. de decret. Syn. Nic.* Tom. i. p. 975.



“ teachers of the word of God among you,  
 “ who maintain this opinion ; therein dia-  
 “ metrically, if I may so speak, opposing  
 “ the hypotheses of *Sabellius*. For he blas-  
 “ phemeth by affirming that the Father is  
 “ the Son, and on the other side that the  
 “ Son is the Father ; but these men in a  
 “ manner teach three Gods, whilst they di-  
 “ vide the holy unity into hypostases, alien  
 “ and wholly divided from each other. For  
 “ it is absolutely necessary that we hold,  
 “ that the divine word is united to the God  
 “ of all things, and that the Holy Ghost re-  
 “ mains and dwells in God ; and also, that  
 “ the divine Trinity is gathered together,  
 “ and united into one, as into a certain  
 “ head ; I mean the omnipotent God, the  
 “ father of all things\*.”

\* And afterwards in the conclusion he saith, that  
 in this way only, καὶ ἡ διὰ τρεῖς καὶ τὸ ἅγιον πνεῦμα τῆς  
 μοναρχίας διασώζονται, i. e. *Both the divine Trinity, (that*  
*is, a real Trinity) and also the holy doctrine of the mo-*  
*narchy, can be preserved.*

Here we see what is *Sabellianism*, viz. To affirm that the Son is the Father, and the Father the Son ; and consequently that the Holy Ghost is the same with both. And all they come very near this heresy, who acknowledge only a *modal* distinction between the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. What is *Tritheism*, he also shews us plainly, viz. That it is to hold, that the three persons in the Trinity are of a different nature, or separated and divided from each other ; or that there is more than one fountain or principle of the divinity. According to which account, *Dr Sherlock* is certainly clear from the charge of *Tritheism* : The Catholic doctrine he declares to be this, *That there are three really distinct hypostases in the Godhead, and yet that there is but one God ; because the Father only is the head of the divinity ; and the Son and Holy Ghost, as they are derived from him ; so they exist in him, and are inseparably united to him.*

Of such a distinction and union of persons we have indeed no example, or exact similitude among created beings : But what then ? It does not follow, that therefore, there cannot be such a distinction and union in the transcendent and most spiritual nature of God. The *Antitrinitarians* can never produce a demonstrative reason to prove that this cannot be ; and divine revelation assures us that so it is. The most weighty arguments that are brought by the *Antitrinitarians* against a distinction of hypostases in the Godhead, are reducible to one, which if well answered, the rest will fall to the ground. The argument is this.

*The most simple being admits of no distinction,*

*God is the most simple being ;*

*Therefore God admits of no distinction.*

*Answ.* If the *Antitrinitarians* that make this objection, are the *Socinians* among us, as I presume they are, it is news to hear that they should argue from the simplicity of the Godhead, seeing the great masters of

that sect, *Socinus, Crellius, &c.* held that *God is a material being, and consequently compounded of matter and form.* Express citations to this purpose may be seen in *Dr Edwards's Antidote against Socinianism*, part i. p. 65, 66.

This opinion they held, because they could not conceive how there can be any substance that is purely spiritual, and abstracted from all matter: And if they could have conceived this, perhaps they would not have stuck at the doctrine of the Trinity, For the great difficulty of conceiving a Trinity in unity, in the Godhead, arises chiefly from hence, that men are apt to measure the divine nature from ideas and notions taken from material things. But to the purpose.

1. The simplicity of the divine nature does indeed exclude all mixture; *i. e.* all composition of things heterogeneous in the Godhead, there being nothing in God but what is God; but for all that, there may be distinction of hypostases in the Godhead,

provided they are homogeneous, and of the same nature, as the Catholic doctrine teaches.

2. The simplicity of the divine nature, if rightly considered, is so far from excluding, that it necessarily infers a distinction of hypostases in the Godhead. For wherein does the simplicity of the Godhead especially consist but in this, that God is a pure eternal mind, free from the mixture of all kind of matter whatsoever? Now an eternal mind must needs have in it from eternity an *ἐννοια* or λόγος, a notion or conception of itself which the schools term *Verbum mentis*; nor can it be conceived without it. This word in God cannot be, as it is in us, a transient, vanishing accident; for then the divine nature would indeed be compounded of substance and accident, which would be repugnant to its simplicity; but it must be a substantial subsisting word. The great apostolical bishop of *Neocæsarea*, *Gregory*, surnamed *Thaumaturgus*, in his panegyric to *Origen* (by all confessed to be



genuine) calls it \* *The most perfect, living, and animate word of the very first mind.* This word also is manifestly (though not divided, yet) distinct from the eternal mind from whence it proceeds. And this is no novel subtlety of the schools, but a notion that runs through all the Fathers, even those of the first ages, as appears from the testimonies produced out of them in my *Defens. Fid. Nic.* and it is also grounded on holy Scripture.

Hence the excellent *Athanasius*, than whom no man better understood the sense of Scripture, and the doctors of the church that were before him, in the article of the Trinity, insists upon it in his oration against the *Sabellians*. In the beginning of which, having first shewn how the catholic church of Christ, in her notion and worship of God, differs from the *Heathens* and *Jews*, he proceeds to declare the difference betwixt the

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\* Τελειότατον καὶ ζῶντα, καὶ αὐτὸ τῷ πρώτῳ τῷ λόγῳ ἐμψυχον.

orthodox christians and the *Sabellians*, and other Unitarians of his time, who under pretence of defending the unity of the Godhead, denied all distinction of hypostases therein. His words are these, “ We are  
 “ separated also from those who corrupt  
 “ *Christianity* with *Judaism*, who denying  
 “ the God of God, profess one God as the  
 “ *Jews* do, affirming him (the Father) to be  
 “ the only God, not upon account that he  
 “ only is unbegotten, and the only fountain  
 “ of the deity, but as if he were without a  
 “ Son, and barren, and void of his living  
 “ word and true wisdom. For they conceive the word of God to be such as proceeds from the mind of man, and his wisdom to be such as that of ours ; and therefore affirm *God* with his *word* to be one  
 “ person, just as we say that a man together  
 “ with his word is one man ; being in this  
 “ no wiser than the *Jews*, who own not the  
 “ *Evangelist* in the beginning of his gospel  
 “ proclaiming, *In the beginning was the word*  
 “ *and the word was with God, and the word*

“ *was God*. For if God hath a word in his  
 “ mind not really begotten of him, as God of  
 “ God, how could *the word be with God*, and  
 “ how could it be *God*? For the word con-  
 “ ceived in the mind of man is not a man  
 “ with another man, seeing it neither lives  
 “ nor subsists, but is only a motion or oper-  
 “ ation of the same living subsisting mind.”

This great man took it for granted that *St. John*, in the text alledged, meant that *the word was with God in the beginning*, before any created being existed, and consequently that he is called *the word of God*, not with respect to the creatures (though it is true that he afterwards revealed the will of God to mankind, and might in that respect also be called *the word of God*) but with respect to God the Father, whose word he eternally was, and with whom he was *in the beginning*; and therefore he was not the same hypostasis with him, and yet he was God as well as the Father. He had never heard of the senseless interpretation of *Socinus*, who by *the beginning* in that

text understands *the beginning of the gospel*; there being then no heretic (among those many that opposed the divinity of our Lord) who had the confidence to advance so ridiculous a sense of those words: *Laelius Socinus* hath the honour of that interpretation.

If it be objected, *That all this being granted, proves only two hypostases in the Godhead, not a Trinity.* I answer, (1.) This proves that a distinction of hypostases in the Godhead is very consistent with its simplicity; nay, that from the true notion of the simplicity of the Godhead, such a distinction necessarily follows. (2.) If there be two hypostases in the Godhead, there may be a third; and that there is a third, the holy Scripture assures us. Indeed I do not remember, that any of the Fathers of the first three centuries have attempted to explain distinctly the procession of the Holy Ghost from the Father and the Son, or from the Father by the Son; there being little or no dispute concerning the divinity of the Holy Ghost, till *Macedonius* appeared, and

disputed the faith of the church in that article. For before him, all the *Antitrinitarians* of what sort soever, chose especially to oppugn the divinity of the Son of God, taking occasion from those texts of Scripture, which respect his human nature, and that œconomy which for our salvation he took upon him. Which pretence, seeing they had not to make use of in disputing against the Godhead of the Holy Ghost, they thought it best to say nothing of it, contenting themselves in opposing the divinity of the Son, and by consequence to overthrow that of the Holy Spirit. But in general I have observed, that those primitive Fathers held the Holy Ghost to be as it were *Vinculum Trinitatis*, the bond of the *Holy Trinity*, the union of Father and Son. Hence some ancient doxologies run thus, *Glory be to the Father, and the Son, in the unity of the Holy Ghost*. And the most learned christian philosopher *Athenagoras*, who flourished very near the first succession of the Apostles, expressly affirms the Father



and the Son to be one ἐνότητι πνεύματι, i. e. *by the unity of the Spirit*; which I think imports the same thing with what *St. Augustin* and other later Fathers say, that the Holy Ghost is *Amor Patris & Filii*. But this by the way.

There is another notion which frequently occurs in the writings of the primitive Fathers tending to shew the incongruity of asserting the Godhead to be so simple a being, as to be μονοπρόσωπον *a solitary single hypostasis*, which hath also a foundation in the holy Scriptures, and it is this; \*with-

\* *Ante omnia Deus erat solus, ipse sibi & mundus & locus & omnia; solus autem quia nihil aliud extrinsecus præter ipsum; cæterum ne tunc quidem solus; habebat enim secum, quam habebat in seipso, rationem suam scilicet. Hanc Græci λόγον dicunt, Tertul. advers. Prax. cap. 5. Satis igitur nobis scire solum, nihil esse Deo coævum; nihil erat præter ipsum, ipse solus multus erat. Neque enim erat sine ratione (Gr. τὸν λόγον) &c. Hippol. Hom. de Deo trino & uno. Bibl. PP. Tom. 15. p. 622. εἰ θεὸς ἦεν, εἰδὲ ἀκίνδυνον διὰ τὴν ἀθένειαν*

but acknowledging a distinction of hypostases in the Godhead, we cannot well conceive that *ἀντάρξια* which we attribute to God, i. e. his self-sufficiency and most perfect bliss and happiness in himself alone, before and without all created beings. But by admitting this, it plainly appears that himself alone is a most perfect and blessed society, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit eternally conversing with, and enjoying each other. See Prov. viii. 22 to ver. 31. inclusive. Where the wisdom of God, which is said to be with God from everlasting, from the beginning, before the earth was, and to be his continual delight; all the Fathers unanimously understood to be (as indeed the words themselves literally and plainly import) σοφία ὑφεισῶσα, a subsisting, personal wisdom, i. e. the Son of God, who is accordingly by St.

ἡμῶν τὸ ὅσον ἐφ' ἡμῶν ἀποσερῶσθαι τὸν θεὸν τοῦ αἰῶς συνον-  
 τῶν αὐτῷ λόγῳ μονογενῆς· σοφίας ὅντι ἡ προσέχαιρεν· ἔτα  
 γὰρ ἐδὲ αἰῶι χαίρων νοηθήσεται· Origen. apud Athana-  
 sium. Tom. i. p. 227.

*Paul* expressly stiled *the wisdom of God*, 1 Cor. i. ver. 24. And that the ~~Wisdom~~ or *Son of God* was known by the ancient *Jews* themselves, under the title of the *wisdom of God*, sufficiently appears from many passages in *Philo*, and from the author of the *Book of wisdom*, chap. vii. ver. 26. compared with *Coloss.* i. ver. 15. and *Heb.* i. ver. 3.

To conclude; The doctrine of the church concerning the blessed Trinity hath been abundantly confirmed by catholic writers both ancient and modern, from many clear texts out of the holy scriptures; which as they assert the unity of the Godhead, so do they also plainly teach us, that there are three, to whom the essential attributes and proper operations of the Godhead do belong, viz, *the Father, Son and Holy Ghost*. The interpretations whereby *Socinus* and his more immediate followers endeavoured to elude the texts alledged by the *Catholics*, are so manifestly forced and strained, that I do not see how any honest mind, that

bears any reverence or respect to the sacred Scriptures, can away with them. This the *Socinians* among us of late seem to be sensible of, and therefore have taken a shorter, but more desperate course by calling in question the authority of the principal Scriptures alledged by us. Thus the author of the pamphlet entituled, *The judgment of the Fathers*, &c. disputes the authority of the Gospel of *St. John*. For he tells us from *Epiphanius* that the *Alogians* or *Alogi* (whom according to his accustomed impudence he highly magnifies and affirms to be the purest and most ancient \* *Gentile* christians, yea and coæval with the Apostles, whereas *Epiphanius* † expressly saith that the heresy of the *Alogi* appeared in the world after the *Cataphrigians* (or *Monta-*

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\* Lardner denies the existence of such a Sect. *Epiphanius* seems to have been the first who used the term *Αλογοι*, and to have applied it to all heretics, who denied that Christ was the *Λογος*. He says *Αλογοι πληθύνονται*. (EDIT.)

† *Her. 51. in ipso initio.*

nists) the *Quintilians*, and the sect of the *Quartodecimani*, and therefore could not be earlier than about the beginning of the third century) were so called, because they denied the *λόγος*, or *word*, of which *St. John* speaks in his *Gospel, epistles and revelation*. They said that all those pieces were written by *Cerinthus*, under the name of *St. John*; and in his *considerations* he produceth their arguments, and with this preface; That he should be glad to see a good answer to the exceptions of those *Unitarians* against those books we receive of *St. John's*. Which implies that he thinks those arguments (which in truth are but senseless cavils,) have not been sufficiently answered by *Epiphanius*, or any other *catholic*; and that he himself cannot tell how to answer them, and therefore must submit to the force of them, till he receives better information.

Now as for the *Apocalypse*; we acknowledge that it hath been questioned by some, not only *heretics* but *catholics*; but upon slight grounds, as hath been sufficiently shewed by divers learned interpreters, and



particularly by *Grotius*, in the preface to his annotations upon it. The second and third epistles also have been, and still are doubted of by many, who rather think them to be written by St. *John* the presbyter; see *Grotius* again in the preface to his notes on the second epistle. But as for the Gospel and first epistle attributed to St. *John*, they have always been received in the church of God, as his undoubted and genuine writings. They are cited as St. *John's* by the *catholic* Fathers, that lived nearest the times of that apostle; and particularly by *Irenæus*, who was an auditor of St. *Polycarp*, the disciple of St. *John*.

As for their being written by *Cerinthus* the *heretic*, no man in his wits, and that understands any thing of the *dogmata* of *Cerinthus*, can imagine it. For it is evident that the first chapter of the gospel according to St. *John*, and divers passages throughout his first epistle, are directly opposite to the *Cerinthian hypothesis*, as I have fully\*

\* Jud. Eccl. Cath. Cap. 23. & seqq.

shewn; and accordingly *Irenæus* and others of the ancients testify, *That they were purposely written by St. John, against the Cerinthian heresy, which in his time began to trouble the church.* So that those *heretics* who fathered the gospel and first epistle, which we receive as *St. John's*, upon *Cerintus*, were by *Epiphanius* deservedly named *ἄλγοι*, men, in this, void of all sense and reason.

But before I dismiss this account of the *Alogi* from *Epiphanius*, I must not omit by the way to observe, that they rejected not only his Gospel and Revelation, but his epistles also, and all upon the same account, because in them there was mention made of the divine λόγος, which they disowned, affirming Christ to be entirely and wholly a mere man, that had no existence before the blessed Virgin. Now where is there any text in the epistles of *St. John* concerning the λόγος, that should give such offence to the *Alogi*? Surely the most likely text is that in 1 Epist. chap. v. ver. 7. *There are*

three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word (ὁ λόγος), and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one. This text then was extant in the Greek copies of the first epistle of St. John, in the age wherein the Alogi lived, i. e. about the beginning of the third century. And accordingly Tertullian, who then flourished, manifestly alludes to it, in his book against *Praxeas*, cap. xxv. in these words, *Connexus Patris in Filio, & Filii in Paracleta, tres efficit coherentes, alterum ex altero, qui tres unum sunt* (οἱ τρεῖς ἐν ἑστί) *non unus*. And not long after him St. Cyprian more clearly and fully, \* *De Patre, Filio, & Spiritu Sancto scriptum est, hi tres unum sunt*. But to proceed.

The same author † tells us, *He cannot believe that the eighth, ninth, tenth, eleventh and twelfth verses of the first chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews were originally a part of that epistle, but have been fraudulently added*. Who can help the infidelity of one who is

\* *De Unitate Eccl.* cap. 4. *prope finem*.

† *Judg. of the Fathers.* p. 30.

such a slave to his hypothesis, as to resolve to believe nothing against it, though never so certain? Those verses are found in all the *Greek* copies of the epistle to the *Hebrews* at this day extant; and all ancient versions of that epistle, the *Syriac*, *Arabic*, and *Æthiopic* render them. But the divine author's applying the words of the *Psalmist* concerning the creation of heaven and earth to the Son of God, *ver.* 10, 11, 12. is so clear a proof of his divinity, that the *Soci-nian* knew not what to say to it, and therefore resolves it shall be no Scripture. Indeed he would seem to slight the argument of the Catholics from those verses, if admitted to be a part of the epistle, and would persuade us that it is easily answered, by saying that *the heavens and earth*, there meant, are only the *new heavens and earth*, foretold by the Prophets, even the Gospel œconomy and state.

But can the heavens and earth, which are said to be made κατ' ἀρχάς, *in the beginning*, or of old, as it is in *Psal.* cii. *ver.* 25.

possibly be understood of the new heavens and earth, foretold by the Prophets, as to come? Can it be said of the new heavens and earth or the Gospel-state, that they shall perish and wax old as a garment, and as a vesture be folded up? Certainly whoever can give credit to such an interpretation, must be given up to a reprobate mind.

But, *O Deus! in quæ nos tempora reser-  
vasti, ut ista patiamur?* as the blessed mar-  
tyr *Polycarp* was wont to say, when he  
heard the blasphemies of the heretics of his  
time. The same wretched author is not  
afraid to say \* *There are shrewd presump-  
tions, that to the institution of Baptism by  
our Saviour, in the gospel of St. Matthew,  
these words have been added, In the name  
of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.*

They are presumptions, and shrewd pre-  
sumptions indeed, that are opposed to the  
faith of all the copies of *St. Matthew's gos-  
pel* at this day extant, and to all the an-  
cient versions of it, and to the practice of

\* *Judg. of the Fathers, p. 22.*



the universal Church of Christ throughout the world, founded on these words, as undoubtedly the words of our Saviour. But what are the shrewd presumptions he speaks of? He names but one, and that is this, *It appears in the acts and epistles of the Apostles, that the Apostles never baptized in that form of words, but only in the name of the Lord Jesus.* But where doth this appear, either in the acts or epistles of the Apostles, that when the Apostles baptized any man they did it in this form only, *I baptize thee in the name of the Lord Jesus?* It is said indeed, that *they baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus?* i. e. into the faith and religion of the Lord Jesus, viz. according to the form of Baptism prescribed by the Lord Jesus himself, i. e. *In the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.* Are not they baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, that are baptized according to that form? Do not we all understand the Lord Jesus to be meant by the second person named in that form, viz. the Son? Hence *Grotius*

upon those words, *Acts xix ver. 5. And when they heard this they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus*, hath this note, *In nomen Patris, & Filii, & Spiritus Sancti*. And for this he refers us to his notes on *Matt. xxviii. ver. 19.* where he handles this matter at large.

Indeed this will clearly appear, if we do but look back to the verses preceding the aforementioned text in the *Acts*. There we read, *ver. 1, 2, 3.* that *St. Paul* meeting with certain Christians at *Ephesus*, asked them whether they had *received the Holy Ghost*; To which they answered, that they had *not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost*. *St. Paul*, wondering at this, replies, *Unto what then were ye baptized?* As if he had said, how can you be ignorant whether there be any Holy Ghost? Have you not been baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost? If not, after what form, or or how have you been baptized? *And they*

said, unto John's baptism. John indeed, as the Apostle rejoins, only baptized unto repentance, thereby to prepare men for the reception of the *Messias*, that was to come after him. He did not baptize in the name of the Lord Jesus, *i. e.* *In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.* This form of Baptism was first appointed by our Saviour himself, and that not till after the resurrection, just before he was to ascend into Heaven, and from thence soon after to pour out the Holy Ghost after a wonderful manner upon the Apostles. Then, and not before, they were commanded by our Lord to baptize, *in plena & adunata Trinitate*, as \* *St. Cyprian* expresses it.

*To the most holy and undivided Trinity, God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be ascribed all honour and glory, adoration and worship, now and for evermore, Amen.*

\* *Epist. ad Jubaianum.*

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# ILLUSTRATION

OF THE

DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY,

IN A LETTER TO A FRIEND:

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BY JOHN WALLIS, D. D.

SAVILIAN PROFESSOR OF GEOMETRY IN THE UNIVER-  
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## A LETTER.

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SIR,

THE doctrine of the Arians, Socinians, or Anti-Trinitarians, (call them as you please, provided you call them not Orthodox Christians) in opposition to those who believe (according to the word of God,) that the Sacred Trinity, of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are so distinguished one from the other, as that the Father is not the Son, or Holy Ghost; the Son not the Father, or Holy Ghost; the Holy Ghost not the Father, or Son; yet so *united*, or *intimately one*, as that they are all the same God; (which, in the Athanasian Creed, is called *Trinity in Unity*, and *Unity in Trinity*; or,

in common speaking, three Persons and one God ;) is what you were lately discoursing with me, and of which I shall give you (some of) my present thoughts.

The Scripture tells us plainly, “ There  
“ are three that bear record in Heaven ; the  
“ Father, the Word, and the Holy-Ghost ;  
“ and these three are one\*.” And the form  
of baptism is, “ In the name of the Father,  
“ and of the Son, and of the Holy-Ghost†.”

And the Christian Church, from the times  
of Christ and his Apostles downwards hi-  
therto, as well before as since the Council  
of Nice, have ever held the Divinity of those  
Three Persons (as they are commonly call-  
ed ;) and that these Three are but one God.  
And, that they have so held, hath been, by  
divers, sufficiently proved from the most  
ancient Christian Writers which are now  
extant. Which, therefore, I take for grant-  
ed, as sufficiently proved by others, without  
spending time, at present, to prove it afresh.

\* 1 John v. 7.      † Matt. xxviii. 19.

That these are three, distinguished one from the other, is manifest : and that this distinction amongst themselves, is often called personality. By which word, we mean, that distinction (whatever it be) whereby they are distinguished one from the other, and thence called Three Persons.

If the word *Person* do not please ; we need not be fond of words, so the thing be agreed : Yet is it a good word, and warranted by Scripture,\* where the Son is called, the express image of his Father's person : (For so we render the word *Hypostasis*, which is there used ; and mean by it, what I think to be there meant.) And we have no reason to wave the word, since we know no better to put in the place of it.

If it be asked, what these personalities or characteristicks are, whereby each person is distinguished one from the other ; I think we have little more thereof in Scripture, than that the Father is said to *beget* ; the Son, to be *begotten* ; and the Holy-Ghost, to *proceed*.

\* Heb. i. 3.

If it be further asked, what is the full import of these words (which are but metaphorical,) and what is the adequate meaning of them ; I think we need not trouble ourselves about it : for, since it is a matter purely of revelation (not of natural knowledge,) and we know no more of it than what is revealed in Scripture ; where the Scripture is silent, we may be content to be ignorant. And we who know so little of the essence of any thing, especially of Spiritual Beings, though finite, need not think it strange that we are not able to comprehend all the particularities of what concerns that of God, and the Blessed Trinity.

I know that the Fathers, and Schoolmen, and some after them, have employed their wits to find out some faint resemblances, from natural things, whereby to express their imperfect conceptions of the Sacred Trinity : but they do not pretend to give an adequate account of it ; but only some conjectural hypotheses, rather of what *may be*, than of what certainly is. Nor need

we be concerned to be curiously inquisitive into it, beyond what God hath been pleased to reveal concerning it.

That the Three Persons are distinguished is evident ; (though we do not perfectly understand what those distinctions are :) that to each of these, the Scripture ascribes divinity ; is abundantly shewed by those who have written on this subject : that there is but one God, is agreed on all hands : that the Father is said to *beget* ; the Son, to be *begotten* ; and the Holy Ghost to *proceed* ; is agreed also ; though we do not perfectly understand the full import of these words.

And here we might rest quietly or acquiesce (without troubling ourselves further) did not the clamorous Socinians importunately suggest the impossibility and inconsistency of these things, insomuch as to tell us, that, how clear soever the expressions of Scripture *be* or *can be*, to this purpose, they will not believe it, as being inconsistent with natural reason. And therefore, though they



do not yet think fit to give us a bare-faced rejection of Scripture; yet they do (and must, they tell us,) put such a forced sense on the words of it (be they never so plain) as to make them signify somewhat else.

There is, therefore, in this doctrine of the Trinity, as in that of the Resurrection from the dead, a double inquiry: First, whether it be possible? and then, whether it be true? And these to be argued (in both cases) from a very different topick; the one, from Natural Reason; the other, from Revelation. Yet so, that this latter doth certainly include the former, if rightly understood. And though we should not be able to solve all difficulties; yet must we believe the thing, if revealed; unless we will deny the authority of such revelation.

Thus our Saviour, against the Sadducees, who denied the resurrection\*: “Ye err (saith he) “not knowing the Scriptures, nor “the Power of God.” The Power of God,

\* Matt. xxii. 29.

if rightly understood, was enough, from the light of reason, to prove it not impossible : but, whether or no it *will be so*, which natural Reason could not determine, was to be argued from Scripture-revelation.

In like manner, St. Paul before Agrippa\*, first argues the *possibility* of it : “Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead †?” For if Agrippa did believe the creation of the world, as many even of the Heathen did, from the light of nature, he could not think it *impossible* for God, who had at first made all things of nothing, to collect out of its dust or ashes a body which once had been. But, whether or no he *would* do so, depended upon another question, to be after asked ‡, “King Agrippa, believest thou the Prophets?” For this was purely a matter of Revelation, and could not otherwise be known. For, as to the *Immortality of the Soul*, and a future state hereafter, ma

\* Acts xxvi.

† Ver. 8.

‡ Ver. 27.

ny of the Heathens went very far, by the light of nature; but, as to the *Resurrection of the Body*, I do not find they had any sentiments about it, or but very faint, if any: and, if they had, it may well be supposed to be the remainder of some ancient tradition from the Jews, or their predecessors. Nor do I see any foundation in nature which should make them think of it before it was revealed, any more than of the redemption of mankind by Christ, which we should never have thought of, had not God himself contrived and declared it to us. But, when that of the Resurrection was once suggested, there was no pretence of reason to think it a thing *impossible*, and therefore no reason to doubt the *truth* of it, when declared, if we believe the Scriptures, wherein it was revealed; especially those of the New Testament.

It is much the same, as to the Doctrine of the Trinity. It is a thing we should not have thought of, if it had not been suggested by Divine Writers; but, when suggest-

ed, there is nothing in Natural Reason, that we know of, or can know of, why it should be thought impossible ; but whether or no it be so, depends only upon Revelation.

And, in this case, the Revelation seems so clear, to those who believe the Scriptures, that we have no reason to doubt of it, unless the thing be found to be really *impossible*, and inconsistent with Reason. Nor do the Anti-trinitarians insist on any other ground why they deny it, save only, that it seems to them absolutely *impossible* ; and therefore think themselves bound to put another sense on all places of Scripture, how clear soever they be, or can be, which prove or favour it.

So that the controversy is now reduced to this single point, whether it be *possible* or *not possible* : whether it be consistent or inconsistent with natural light or reason. And to that point therefore I shall confine my discourse. For it seems agreed on all hands, as to those who believe the Scrip-

tures, that, if it be not *impossible*, it is sufficiently revealed.

Now, for us, who understand so little of God's infinite Essence; and which it is impossible for us fully to comprehend, who are ourselves but finite, and mostly conversant with material objects; insomuch that we cannot pretend to understand the essence of our own souls; and, when we attempt to explain it, must do it rather by saying what it is not, than what it is; so hard a matter is it for us to fix in our mind or fancy a notion, idea, or conception, of a spiritual being, which falls not under our senses: it is hard, I say, for us (who understand so little of a spirit) to determine (of what God is pleased to reveal) that it is *impossible*, or inconsistent with his essence; which essence we cannot understand.

But what is it that is thus pretended to be *impossible*? It is but this, that *there be Three Somewhats, which are but one God*; and these *Somewhats* we commonly call *persons*. Now what inconsistency is there in all



this? That Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are three, is manifest; and are, in scripture language, distinguished. That there is but one God, is manifest also; and all those three are this God: that the name *person* is no incongruous word, is evident from *Hebrews* i. 3. where it is used. If it be said, it doth not agree to them exactly in the same sense in which it is commonly used amongst men, we say so too; nor doth any word, when applied to God, signify just the same as when applied to men, but only somewhat analogous thereunto.

What kind or degree of distinction (according to our metaphysics) this is, we need not be very solicitous to know; or, whether in our metaphysics, accommodated to our notions of finite beings, there be any name for it: it is enough for us, if these *Three* may truly be so distinguished, as that one be not the other, and yet all but *One God*.

Now, that there is no *inconsistence* or *impossibility*, that what in one regard is *Three* may in another regard be *one*, is very mani-

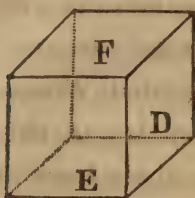
fest from many instances that may be given even in finite beings, such as we converse with; which, though they do not adequately agree with this of the *Sacred Trinity* (nor is it to be expected that they should; finite, with what is Infinite;) yet there is enough in them to shew, there is no such inconsistency as is pretended.

I shall spare to instance in many resemblances which have been given long since by the Fathers and Schoolmen, or by later writers; which, though they are not pretended to be adequately the same with that of the sacred Trinity (as neither will any thing else be, that we can take from finite beings; yet are they sufficient to shew that there is no inconsistency in it; which is all that is here incumbent on us to prove. I shall only name a few.

I will begin with what concerns the most gross of finite beings; that is, material bodies.

Suppose, for example, a cubical body, which what it is every one knows, that

knows a dye. In this are three dimensions,



length, breadth, and height, and yet but one cube. Its length (suppose between east and West) A B. Its breadth (suppose between north and South) C D. Its height (be-

tween bottom and top) E F. Here are three local dimensions, truly distinguished one from the other ; not only imaginarily. The distance between East and West (whether we think or think not of it) is not that between North and South ; nor are either of these, that are between top and bottom. The length is not the breadth or height ; the breadth is not the length or height ; and the height is not the length or breadth : but they are *three* dimensions, truly distinct one from the other ; yet are all these but *one* cube : and if any one of the three were wanting, it were not a cube. There is no inconsistency therefore, that what in one regard is *three* (three dimensions) may, in

another regard, be so united as to be but *one* (one cube.) And if it may be so in corporeals, much more in spirituals.

Suppose we, further, each of these dimensions infinitely continued; the length infinitely Eastward and Westward, the breadth infinitely Northward and Southward, the height infinitely upward and downward: here are *three* infinite dimensions, and but *one* cube; there being no limits in nature greater than that which a cube cannot be. And these three dimensions (though distinct) are equal to each other, else it were not a cube. And though we should allow, that a cube cannot be infinite, because a body, and therefore a finite creature; yet a spirit may; such as is the infinite God. And therefore there is no inconsistency, in there being *three* personalities, each infinite and all equal, and yet but *one* Infinite God, essentially the same with those *three Persons*

I add further, that such infinite cube can therefore be but *one*, and those dimensions can be but *three*, not more nor fewer; for,

if infinite as to its length (Eastward and Westward,) and as to breadth (Northward and Southward,) and as to its height (upward and downward,) it will take up all imaginary space possible, and leave no room either for more cubes or more dimensions. and if this infinite cube were, and shall be, eternally so; its dimensions also must be infinite and co-eternal.

I say further: If in this (supposed) cube, we suppose (in order, not in time) its first dimension, that of length, as A B; and to this length be given an equal breadth, which is the natural generation of a square, as C D, which completes the square basis of this cube; and to this basis of length and breadth be given, as by a further procession from both, an equal height E F, which completes the cube; and all this eternally (for such is the cube supposed to be;) here is a fair resemblance (if we may *parvis componere magna*) of the Father, as the fountain or original; of the Son, as generated of him from all eternity; and of the Holy Ghost, as eter-



nally proceeding from both : and all this without any inconsistence. This *longum, latum, profundum* (long, broad, and tall,) is but *one* cube ; of *three dimensions*, and yet but *one body* : and this *Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, three Persons*, and yet but *one God*.

And, as there, the dimensions are not (in the abstract) predicated or affirmed of each other, or the cube of either (the length is not the breadth or heighth, nor either of these a cube ;) but (in the concrete) cube is affirmed of all ; this *longum, latum, profundum*, is a *cube*, and the *same cube* : so here, in the abstract, the personality of the *Father* is not that of the *Son*, nor either of these that of the *Holy Ghost*, nor the *Deity* or *Godhead* any of these ; but (in the concrete) though the personalities are not, yet the persons are, each of them, *God*, and the *same God*.

If it be objected, that those concretes are affirmed or predicated of each other ; that *longum* is also *latum* and *profundum* (this *long* is *broad* and *tall* ; but not so here, the

*Father* is not the *Son* or *Holy Ghost* : I answer, That, if the words be rightly considered, the analogy holds here also; for when we say, this *long* is *broad* and *tall* (where *cube* or *body* is understood) the full meaning is plainly thus ; this body which, as to one dimension (that of *length*,) is said to be a *long* body, is the same body, which, as to another dimension (that of *breadth*,) is said to be a *broad* body ; and which, as to a third dimension (that of *height*,) is said to be a *tall* body. So here, that God, which (as to one Personality) is *God the Father*, is the same God, which (as to another personality) is *God the Son*, and which (as to a third personality) is *God the Holy Ghost*. So the analogy holds every way ; nor is there any inconsistency in either case. (*After stating some other cases of analogy, the author adds :*)

It is true, that not any, nor all, of these instances, nor any of those given by other learned men, do adequately express the distinction and unity of the *Persons* in the *Sacred Trinity* ; for neither hath God distinct-

ly declared it to us, nor are we able fully to comprehend it, nor is it necessary for us to know. But because we do not know “How “the bones grow in the womb of her that “is with child\*,” shall we therefore say they do not grow there? Or, because “We “cannot by searching find out God †,” because “we cannot find out the Almighty to “perfection,” shall we therefore say, things *cannot be*, when God says they *are*, only because we know not *how*? If God say, “These Three are one ‡?” shall we say, they are not? If God say, “The Word was God,” and, “The word was made Flesh§,” shall we say, Not so, only because we cannot tell *how*? It is safer to say, It is; when God says it is, though we know not (in particular) how it is: especially when there are so many instances in nature, to shew it not to be impossible or inconsistent with reason. The thing is sufficiently revealed to those who are willing to be taught, and “receive

\* Eccl. xi. 5.

† Job xi. 7. Eccl. viii. 17.

‡ 1 John v. 7.

§ John i. 1. 14.

the truth in the love of it"\*. Nor is it denied by those who gainsay it; but that, if the thing be possible, it is sufficiently revealed; there being no other exception made, as to the Revelation, but the impossibility of the thing. "But if any man list to be contentious †," and to "quarrel about words ‡;" it is no wonder if "hearing they do hear and not understand §;" and that God "gives them over to believe a lie ||," who do not "love the truth." But "the humble he will teach his way \*\*." And, while we are so, we are safe. Yours,

Aug. 11, 1690.

JOHN WALLIS.

\* 2 Thess. ii. 10      † 1 Cor. xi. 16. Rom. ii. 8.

‡ 1 Tim. vi. 4. Tit. iii. 9.

§ Acts xxviii. 26. Matt. xiii. 13. 14.

|| 2 Thess. ii. 10. 11. Rom. i. 21. 28.

\*\* Psal. xxv. 9.





## EXCERPTUM\*

EX EJUSDEM JOANNIS WALLISII

### SECUNDA CONCIONE DE SANCTA TRINITATE.



#### *Objectio Quinta.*

Objicietur forte porro ; Quid opus est ut de voce *persona* contendamus, (ut appellantur *Tres Personæ* ; si saltem *Tres quidam* (innominati) aut *Tria quædam* sit dictu sufficiens ?

Respondeo 1. Nobis non esse plane necessariam *Personæ* vocem ; quin ea carere possimus. Sufficeret nobis vox *Hypostasis*. Et quidem si putent Græcorum *Hypostasin* non bene reddi per Latinorum *Personam*, utantur per me licet Græca voce *Hypostasi*.

H

\* Wallisii Op. Vol. iii. p. 317.

(Nos utrovis vocabulo idem intendimus.) Atque tum forte se privatos sentient ea cavillationis ansa, quam captant, a communi apud nos usu, quo *Tres personæ* nonnunquam dicantur pro *Tribus Hominibus*.

Verum 2°. si eatenus consensum sit, ut *Tres quidam* (seu *Tria quædam*, sic considerata) possint esse *Unus Deus*; non video cur de nomine *personæ* debeant contendere. Quippe hæc est *λογομαχία* mera, de nomine contendere, si de *re* seu *notione* consensum sit; quod *hi Tres*, inter se distincti, *sint Unus Deus*.

3. Si admissum foret (quod, cur sit, non video,) quod vox *persona*, aut non perfecte, aut minus apte, *notionem* illam exprimat quam intellectam volumus; non gravius quid hinc inferri posset, quam, quod *nomenclaturam* haud satis commodam assignavimus; non, quod ea *notio* non sit vera. Quo nomine si cui cavillari libet, perinde est ac si quis contenderet, nunquam extitisse virum illum qui dicebatur *Pius Quintus*; eo quod, qui sic dicebatur, non

fuerit vere *pius*. (Sufficit, si eo nomine satis intelligatur, quem virum volumus.) Per *Tres Personas* (in Divinis) nos intelligimus *hos tres*; *Patrem, Filium, & Spiritum Sanctum*: quos dicimus, ita inter se distinctos esse, ut tamen sint *Unus Deus*.

4. At interim, non video, quin vox *persona* sit satis apta; (neque ipsi, quod sciam, aptiorem suggerunt, quam pro *persona* substituamus.)

Horum duos designat nobis Scriptura Sacra, nominibus *Patris & Filii*; qui quidem Filius a Patre *genitus* dicitur; (neque erit de hisce vocibus cavillandum, cum eas exhibeat Scriptura Sacra;) sed sensu metaphorico (saltem figurativo) intelligendas esse satis constat. Nemo enim putaverit, hunc *Patrem* sic *genuisse* suum *Filium*, ut voces illæ (primaria sua significatione) apud nos significant.

*Relationes* autem illæ, *Patris & Filii*, sensu proprio, tales sunt, quales innuit (sensu proprio) vox *persona*.

Adeoque (per eandem analogiam) *Pater* & *Filius*, sensu metaphorico seu figurativo, apte dicantur *Personæ*, eodum sensu figurativo. Et quo sensu dicuntur *Pater* & *Filius*, eodem dicendi sunt *Personæ*; secundum veram propriamque Latinæ vocis *personæ* significationem. Nam, sic *relatos*, Latini vocant *personas*. *Esse Patrem* & *Esse Filium* est *Esse personam*; & quo sensu sunt *Pater* & *Filius*, eodum & sunt *Personæ*.

Quod si *Pater* & *Filius*, apti dicantur *Personæ*; non dubitandum erit, quin sic dici possit *Spiritus Sanctus*, ab ipsis procedens (ἐκπορευόμενος) Ut Joh. 14. 26. *Paracletus ille, qui est Spiritus Sanctus quem mittit Pater in nomine Meo, ille vos docebit omnia.* Et. Joh. 15. 26. *Cum autem venerit Paracletus ille, quem Ego mittam vobis a Patre, Spiritus ille veritatis, qui a Patre emanat, ille testabitur de Me.* Unde manifestum est, quo sensu *Pater* & *Filius* reputandi sunt *Personæ*; eodem & *Paracletus* ille, seu *Spiritus Sanctus*, sic reputandus erit.

Adeoque (ni fallor) satis vindicavi, tum *notionem* ipsam, quod *hi Tres* (quocunque nomine censendi sunt) sint *Unus Deus*; tum nomen ipsum, quod apte dicendi sint *Personæ*.

### *Objectio Sexta.*

Unam adhuc objectionem nunc memorabo, cui cum satisfecero, desistam; cætera, quæ dicenda habeo, in tempus aliud relaturus.

Objectio sexta (eaque debilis) hæc est; quod ipsi *Trinitarii* (ut loquuntur hi objectores) non omnes inter se consentiunt, sed inter se differunt, aliter atque aliter se expedientes, hanc *de Trinitate notionem* explicando.

Esto hoc. Annon autem & *Anti-trinitarii*, etiam magis adhuc inter se differunt, dum hanc oppugnant? Annon *Ariani* & *Sociniani*, tantundem inter se differunt quantum a nobis utrivis? atque hoc ipsum profitentur ipsi? Annon item & *Ariani* inter se, & inter se *Sociniani*, plus differunt, quam inter se *Trinitarii*? Omnino.



Non quidem negamus, quin alii viri, aliis atque aliis temporibus, aliter atque aliter se expediverint, hanc ipsam notionem, de Personarum inter se differentiis explicando.

Sed id ipsum obvenire solet, in explicandis rebus in mundo versatissimis, puta, *Tempore, Loco, Spatio, Motu, & similibus*. Nemo est qui se non putaverit satis intelligere, quid hisce vocibus significetur, dum id nondum sit interrogatus. Sin de horum aliquo interrogetur, Num *aliquid* sit aut *nihil*, num *res* aut *non-res*, aut *aliquid rei*, & *quid sit hoc aliquid*? Omnino non sperandum est, aut expectandum, ut se expediant omnes, eodem plane modo rem ipsam explicando, et quidem, tam *clare perspicueque*, ut qui velit (quod aiunt) nodum in scirpo quærere, non possit ansam captare cavillandi. Idem dixerim de *Calore & Frigore*; de *Luce, Visu, & Coloribus*; de *Odoribus & Saporibus*, horumque variis speciebus.

Nunquamne de hoc consensum iri dicemus, *quod ignis comburit & consumit lig-*

*num* ; nisi prius intelligamus *qua figura sint igneae particulae*, (*quis earum motus & quo impulsu*) *quæ subeunt ligni poros*, ejusque *partes dirimunt* : has in fumum, illas in flammam, istasque in cineres convertendo ; & *quas quæque in horum singula* ; & , *quomodo id fiat* ?

Quantæ igitur erit dementiæ in abditis *Dei* rebus id exigere, (ut omnes eodem plane modo conceptus suos explicent ; ) cum id non expectandum sit in rebus *naturæ*, quæ passim occurrent, suntque omnibus, semper & ubique, obviæ !

Et quidem quo casu, pro explicandis conceptibus nostris non alia suppetunt vocabula quam figurata ; non mirum est, si alii utantur *metaphoris*, pro conceptibus suis quadantenus exprimendis.

Verum hactenus, credo, inter orthodoxos consensum esse omnes : quod inter *Tres illos*, qui in Sacris literis vocantur, *Pater, Filius, & Spiritus Sanctus* ; seu *Pater, Sermo, & Spiritus* ; sit quædam *diversitas* seu *distinctio*, qua *Tres* sint ; (& quidem ma-

jor, quam quæ est inter ea quæ dici solent *divina attributa*;) non vero talis qua sint *Tres Dei*, sed ut sint *Deus Unus*. Atque hanc *diversitatem* seu *distinctionem* visum est his vocibus *hypostaseos* & *personæ* denotare.

Consensum item est, quod harum *personarum* una, (quæ *Filius* & ὁ λόγος seu *Sermo*, dicitur,) est *caro facta*, seu *incarnata*, assumpta in se *humana natura*.

Sed, de modo quo, vel hae *naturæ* duæ (*Divina* scilicet & *Humana*,) inter se *uniuntur*, vel *Tres illæ personæ* inter se *distinguuntur*; coarctati sumus *modeste nescire*; non perfecte & *adæquate comprehendere*, sed eatenus saltem quatenus Deo visum id nobis *revelare*, seu *patefacere*.

Scimus quidem nos *animam immortalem humano corpori* conjunctam esse, ut fiat *unus homo*; (ita tamen ut nec illa desinat esse *spiritus*; neque hoc, *corpus* esse;) sed difficili dictu est, *quomodo* fiat.

Pariter dicimus, quod homo *Jesus* (ita ut maneat *homo*,) & *Deus in carne patefactus*

ita ut non desinat esse *Deus*) sunt *unus Christus* ; sed *qualis* sit hæc *unio*, quam *hypostaticam* dicimus, nos non *perfecte intelligimus*. nec *profitemur* nos *adæquate comprehendere*.

Scimus quidem quod *Pater* dicitur *generare* ; & *Filius*, esse *genitus* ; & *Spiritus Sanctus*, *procedere* : sed, quæ sit horum verborum (in Divinis) *plenaria significatio*, nos non *perfecte intelligimus*, (nec necessarium est ut *perfecte intelligamus* ; cum neque *perfecte intelligamus ipsum esse Dei*, nedum *ipsius gignere*;) sed, prout jam ante dictum est, inter orthodoxos convenit.

Ipsique Deo Patri, Deo Filio, Deoque Spiritui Sancto ; Tribus Personis, sed uni Deo ; sit laus, honor, & gloria ; & nunc & in secula seculorum. Amen.

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AN  
ILLUSTRATION  
OF THE  
DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY.

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BY  
*2*  
LORD MONBODDO.



## PREFACE.

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*By the Editor.*  
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UNBELIEVERS in the Trinity object to the doctrine as impossible and inexplicable. To obviate this objection, many explanations of the doctrine have been attempted by the ancient Fathers and by others. In reading these explanations, it is but justice to the doctrine, to bear in mind, that the doctrine is one thing and the explanation of it another. That Jesus Christ was the only begotten Son of God, is the doctrine of Scripture. But *how* the Son was begotten of the Father,—*how* the Holy Spirit proceeded from the Father and the Son,—and *how* the three divine persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, are one God, are conjectures, which have no other autho-

rity than belongs to the judgment of their respective authors, and no other merit than endeavouring to explain that which it is the interest of all men, as far as possible, to understand. But on the merit or demerit of these illustrations the truth of Scripture, and of the doctrine, does not at all depend.

Dr. Wallis, the celebrated Savilian professor of Geometry, has given (in a letter to a friend,\* published by his descendant, J. Wallis, Esq.) an explanation of the doctrine of the Trinity, which is the more valuable, because it rescues him from the class of Unitarian expositors, to which Mr. Belsham has adjudged him in his *Calm Inquiry*. He was indeed a firm believer in the orthodox doctrine, whatever advantage he might have given to his Socinian opponents by any detached passages of his expositions of the doctrine.†

\* Prefixed to Dr. Wallis's Sermons, Preface, p. lxxxiv.

† Mr. Belsham, after quoting a passage from Dr. Wallis's "Considerations on the Trinity," says "This

Lord Monboddo has brought, from the theology of Plato, illustrations of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity, more congenial to the subject, than Dr Wallis's explanation, because derived from a philosophy, which probably had its origin in the Hebrew Scriptures,\* the knowledge of which the Greeks might have acquired by their intercourse with Egypt. The similarity of the two doctrines, was the occasion of con-

truly Unitarian doctrine received the marked approbation of the University of Oxford, while Dr. Sherlock's hypothesis, that the three persons of the Trinity were three distinct infinite minds, underwent a public censure." With the proceedings of the University against Dr. Sherlock's hypothesis I am very imperfectly acquainted ; but that Dr. Wallis was no favourer of Unitarianism, nor Dr. Sherlock of Tritheism, we know, for the former, from his *Tres Conciones de Sancta Trinitate*, as well as from his letter to a Friend, and, for the latter, from the judgment of Bishop Bull, in the preceding discourse.

\* Numenius thought that Moses and Plato did not differ in their first principles ; and Clemens Alexandrinus, that Plato borrowed his three principles from Moses.



verting many heathens from paganism to Christianity in the first ages of the Church. Augustin, who was a great admirer of the Platonic philosophy, as well as a zealous defender of the Christian verity, says of the ancient Platonists, *si hanc vitam illi viri nobiscum agere potuissent, viderent profecto, cujus auctoritate facilius consuleretur hominibus, & paucis verbis & sententiis mutatis Christiani fierent, sicut plerique recentiorum nostrorumque temporum Platonici fecerunt.\**

Unitarians† have attempted to discredit the doctrine of the Trinity by asserting, that it was introduced into the Church by the converted Platonists of the second century. It may be said with much more truth, and was maintained by Tertullian and others, that the antitrinitarian heresies were the offspring of philosophy. We contend therefore on the authority of the Fathers of the second, third, and fourth centuries, that the

\* Augustin Op. Tom. I. De vera religione, §. 8.

† Dr. Priestley, Mr Belsham, &c.

doctrine of the Trinity was not brought into the Church by the Platonists, but the Platonists were brought into the Church by the doctrine. So congenial indeed were the doctrines of Christ with the philosophy of Plato, that the unconverted readers and admirers of this philosophy did not scruple to assert, that our Saviour learned them from the writings of Plato ; though, as St. Ambrose observed, it is more probable, that the philosopher derived them from the Hebrew Scriptures. *Dicere ausi sunt (Platonis lectores & dilectores) omnes Domini nostri, Jesu Christi, sententias, quas admirari & prædicare coguntur, de Platonis libris eum didicisse.*—Cum reperisset Ambrosius Platonem Jeremiæ temporibus profectum esse in Ægyptum, ubi propheta ille tunc erat, probabilius esse ostendit, quod Plato potius literis nostris per Jeremiam fuerit imbutus.\* Absurd, however, as this supposition of the

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\* Augustini. Op. Tom. III. De doctrina Christiana. §. 43.

gentile Platonists was, that Christ derived his doctrines from the writings of Plato, it has this advantage ; it is a proof, that the doctrines supposed by our modern Unitarians to have been derived from Platonism, were the doctrines of the *Gospel*, and not introduced into the Church by philosophizing Christians of the *second* century.

Lord Monboddo asserts that the doctrine of the Trinity, (which he maintains to be “ the foundation of the Christian religion, and that which makes us Christians”) is far from being inexplicable ; though he admits that it cannot be *explained* and *understood* without the aid of philosophy. No more, indeed, can the being, or unity of God. But it is no objection to the unity of the Godhead, that it cannot be apprehended without philosophy and abstraction. Much less ought it to be objected to the doctrine of the Trinity, that it cannot be *understood* by the ignorant and unlearned, (the *simplices, imprudentes, & idiotae*) or that it is capable of illustration from the philosophy of Plato.

When Lord Monboddo asserts that "we cannot believe what we do not understand," this can be said only of inquiring and philosophical minds; and not even of such minds, when fully impressed with a persuasion of the authenticity and truth of Scripture. But whether true or not, it is clear, that Lord Monboddo, if he did not believe the doctrine of the Trinity, till he understood it, has shewn himself in the following illustration, a believer on conviction, and *that* on two grounds, its *evidence in the Scriptures*, and the *perfection of the truths resulting from it*, surpassing the most consummate systems of heathen Theology.\*

\* I cannot present the reader with a better introduction to Lord Monboddo's illustration than the following passage from DR. HALES's very valuable analysis of chronology (vol. iii. p. 502.) relative to Origen's exposition of the Trinity of Plato:

"1. ὁ Πάτερ, THE FATHER, whom the Platonists reckoned Αὐτοὺν, "*Being itself*," and according to Porphyry, Τ' ἀγαθόν, "*the Good*:"—2. Ὁ Νοῦς, "*the Mind*," or ὁ Λόγος, "*the Oracle*," whom they represented, as inferior to the first, [not in *nature*, but *order*; see the next paragraph,] and whom Porphyry calls Δημιουργός, "*the framer of the world*:"—And 3. ἡ ψυχὴ τοῦ κόσμου, "*the soul of the world*," (See Gale,

vol. ii. p. 134.) alluding, perhaps, to the SPIRIT OF GOD brooding upon the abyss, Gen. i. 2. The first Being Plato called Πηγή της Θεότητος, "*the fountain of the Godhead*," and "the Father of the leader and cause of all," του τε ἡγέμονος καὶ αἰτιου παντος Πατρὸς. And the leader was remarkably a title of Christ, both in the Old and New Testament, 1 Chron. v. 2. Micah v. 2. Deut. ix. 25. Matt. ii. 6. &c. See Cudworth p. 385, 386, 387.

"These three persons of Plato's Trinity were not only *eternal*, but *necessarily existent*, and *absolutely imperishable*, [and therefore equal in nature and power.] For the first could not exist without the second, which was called Αὐτοσοφία, "*Wisdom itself*." (or that wisdom personified, which was with God at the creation, Prov, viii. 22—31. a title which our Lord assumed to himself, Matt. xi. 19.) nor the first and second without the third, any more than original *light*, without *splendour*, or *effulgence*, according to Plato's comparison.—And he held, ὅτι Νους ἐστὶ γενησ-της του παντων αιτιου, "that Mind is cognate with the first cause of all things," which in the language of the Nicene Creed, was expressed, that the Son was ὁμοουσιος, of the same substance with the Father, and therefore not a *creature*. Cudworth. Intell. Syst. p. 573. And this indeed was the true Athanasian doctrine; for in the language of Athanasius himself, εἰ δὲ αἰδιος ἐστιν ὁ υἱός, οὐκ ἦν κτισμα. εἰ δὲ κτισμα τυγχάνει, οὐκ ἦν αἰδιος. "If the Son be eternal, he was no creature; but if he is a creature, he was not eternal."

"This remarkable analogy between the Platonic Philosophy of the Alexandrian School, and the true Athanasian, or Nicene doctrine, is highly satisfactory." ANALYSIS OF CHRONOLOGY, Vol. III. p. 502.

On the importance of this analogy between the Christian *Trinity of Persons* in the Godhead, and the Platonic doctrine of the *Divine essence in Three Hypostases*, see Bishop Stillingfleet's *Vindication*, p. 214—217. The passage I have subjoined to Lord Monboddo's Illustration. (EDIT.)



AN  
ILLUSTRATION  
OF THE  
DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY.

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BY LORD MONBODDO.\*

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THE doctrine of the Trinity is commonly held to be a mystery inconceivable. But no man can believe what he cannot conceive. And, as it is a fundamental doctrine of the Christian religion, no man, who does not believe the Trinity, can be said to be a Christian;† for he cannot believe that Jesus

\* *Ancient Metaph. vol. v. p. 189.*

† Christ commanded the Apostles to baptize all nations in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. They therefore who are not so baptized, and whose faith does not correspond with such baptism, are not Christians. That this was the sense of the primitive Church, we know not only from the writings of individual Fathers of the Church, but from the general sense of the Church expressed at the council of Arles, (c. 8.) A. D. 314. and of Nice, (c. 19.) A. D. 325. by both of which the baptism of unbelievers in the Trinity was declared void. (EDIT.)

Christ was the son of God, that is, the second person of the Trinity, who assumed the human nature and human form, in order to save mankind, and to enable them to make some progress, in this life; in regaining their former state, from which they had fallen.—But the Trinity I hold to be so far from an inconceivable mystery that, by a Philosopher, it is not only perfectly conceived, but understood to be a most perfect system of *Cosmogony*, and I may add *Theogony*;—more perfect than any system that has been invented by any ancient philosopher, or that could have been invented by any philosopher.—I have elsewhere observed,\* that the Christian religion is not only the best popular religion that ever was in the world, but also the most philosophical. The eternal generation of the Son of God and his incarnation, are both truths of philosophy; but the doctrine of the Trinity is more philosophical still than either of the

\* Vol. 4 of this work, p. 386.

other two ; for it gives us what may be called a system of the whole universe, and of the regular and orderly production of it from the first cause.

This first cause is called by Plato the *Πρῶτος Θεός*, or *first God* ; and in the language of the Christian church, he is called *God the Father* ; and he was so called in the books of Hermes, as is observed by St. Cyrillus in what he has written against Julian the emporor.\* The first emanation or procession from him, not in order of time, (for all things belonging to the Godhead are

\* In this work St. Cyrillus has shown evidently that the doctrine of the Trinity was contained in the writings of the Egyptian philosopher *Hermes Trismegistus*: So that there can be no doubt that this doctrine was known in Egypt ; and that, though it was kept by Plato, *ἐν ἀπορητοῖς*, that is, *as a secret*, it was known to the philosophers of the Alexandrian school, particularly to Porphyry, from whose writings Cyrillus has given us a quotation, which contains the whole doctrine of the three Persons of the Trinity.

from all eternity) but in dignity and pre-eminence, is what we call the second *person* of the Trinity, or as it is more properly expressed in the language of the Greek church, ὑπόστασις or *substance*, not *person*. This Second person of the Trinity is the *Son*, and, as our Scripture tells us, *the only begotten of the Father*, that is to say, the only Being which proceeds immediately from him.—This Second Person is the principle of Intelligence, *by whom*, as we are told, *every thing was made, and nothing made without him*: And, indeed, wherever there is a system, which every Theist must suppose the universe to be, and the most perfect of all systems, it must be formed by Intelligence, which, as it is the principal thing in the formation of the system, very properly holds the second place next to the first cause, or author of the system. The third constituent principle of the system, is the πνεῦμα ἅγιον, or *Holy Spirit*. By the Platonic philosophers it is called very properly ψυχή του κόσμου, or *anima mundi*, as from it

is derived that animation, motion and action, which makes the whole of nature a *living system*.—

These three principles of the intellectual world, though distinct substances, make but one Being. And thus we have *the three in one*, and *the one in three*; and the unity of the Godhead perfectly preserved. Nor, indeed, without such union, could we have any conception of the Deity. For we could not conceive a Deity without intelligence, nor without a spirit of life and animation; without both which he never could have produced the universe. Neither can we conceive a Supreme Being, who produces nothing: So that both intelligence and animation are essential to his nature. That three distinct substances should make but *One being*, appears, I know, to many, an inconceivable mystery. But it will not appear so to a philosopher, who considers that the Second Person is *potentially*, or *virtually* contained in the First, otherwise he could



not be produced out of him : And if so, the Second Person must contain in him the First *actually* ; and the same must be the case of the Third Person, with respect to the Second.



\*I will add something here to what I have said upon the Trinity in the preceding volume ; and I hope the reader will not think, that, when I have done so, I have said too much upon a subject of such importance, being the foundation of the Christian Religion, and that which makes us Christians : For it is in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, that we are baptised, that is, initiated into the Christian Religion. And, as no man can believe what he does not comprehend, I think it will not be improper to add this chapter upon the subject ; in which I will explain another mystery of the Christian Religion,—the eternal generation of the Son of God.

But besides the reverence that every Christian ought to have for his religion, I hold that no man can be truly a Theist who does not know the doctrine of the Trinity; for, without that knowledge, he cannot perfectly know the nature of God, in what manner he exists, nor how, or in what order, all things in the universe proceed from him.

What appears to be most uncomprehensible, in the doctrine of the Trinity, is, that there are three *persons* in it, or *substances* as they ought to be called,\* and yet these three make but one Being; so that the Trinity is both *three* and at the same time *one*.—

It contains the system of the divine nature, which, as I have shown in the preceding volume,† must necessarily comprehend one Supreme Being, the Author of all

\* The word in Greek is *υποστασις*, which is the very same with the Latin word, *substantia* and with our word *substance*.

† Page 191,

things, and from him proceeding Intelligence, and from Intelligence a Spirit of Life and Animation, both so essential to the first being, that they are to be considered as making with him but one being, consisting of three substances.—

Thus it appears, that the whole system of the universe, and even the individuals of that system, consist wholly of *the one in the many*, and *the many in the one*. So that the Supreme Being, the head of that system, if he were so different from the other beings of the system, as to be only one and not more, there would not be that unity in the system which we must conceive to be in a system so perfect as that of the universe. The substances which the doctrine of the Trinity joins with the nature of the Deity, are not only perfectly consistent with it, but so essential to it, that we could not have an idea of Deity without them. These are, as I have said, Intelligence and the principle of Vitality; without both which we could not

conceive the Deity to have produced the universe ; and, as that production is essential to his nature, we could not have otherwise conceived him to be God.—

As, therefore, the relation of the one and the many goes through the whole system of beings in the universe, beings divine as well as others, it is evident that the system of the universe is the most uniform, and in that respect the most compleat system that can be imagined. How compleat it is in other respects I shall afterwards show. I will only say further, upon the subject of the Trinity, that it is so necessarily connected with the being of a God, that we cannot conceive a God without the principles of Intelligence and Vitality being essential parts of his nature, and that it appears to have been believed by every nation who had what can be called a system of religion. It was a part of the religion of the Jews in the time of Moses, though it was not revealed or explained to them as it was by our Saviour to his Disciples.—

There is another mystery in the Christian Religion which is as incomprehensible, by those who are not philosophers, as the doctrine of the Trinity is. The mystery I mean, is the eternal generation of the Son of God. The Son, or Second Person of the Trinity, is, according to the doctrine of the Christian Church, eternal as well as the Father, from whom he is produced: And this is what is meant by the eternal generation of the Son. Now to a man, who is not a philosopher, it must appear inconceivable that one being should be produced by another, and yet be co-existent with him from all eternity. It is not, therefore I think, to be wondered that there should be such a heresy in the church as Arianism, or that it should have been once so prevalent. Now the doctrine of Arius was, that, as the Son, or Second Person of the Trinity was produced, (or *begotten*, as it is expressed in Scripture,) by the Father, he must have been in existence posterior to him; and then he must have existed *in time*, and



not from all eternity, as the Father existed; and, accordingly, Arius maintained that there was a time when he was not. His expression was, *ἡν ὄτε οὐκ ἦν*. But antient learning will explain this mystery, as well as the mystery of the Trinity, and show that one thing may proceed from another as its cause and yet be coeval with it. This may be explained by an example which every man, who has learned the elements of geometry, will readily understand: It is this: that every corollary of a proposition is a truth eternal as well as the proposition itself; and yet it is derived from the proposition as its cause, and could not have existed if the proposition had not been an eternal truth.

What has led Arius and his followers into the error of supposing that the Son, being produced by the Father, could not be co-eternal with him, but must have existed in time, is what we observe of the production of things on this earth, where the production is always posterior in its existence to the cause producing it. But this is only

true of things material, which have no permanent existence, but are constantly changing, being never the same thing for two moments together; so that they cannot be said properly to exist, but are always in the state of becoming something different from what they are; *οὐκ ἐστὶ ἀλλὰ γίνεται*, as it is expressed in Greek: Whereas beings divine have a real existence, and are the *τα ὄντως ὄντα*; and the same is true of all immaterial Beings.

But setting aside things immaterial, there is one material thing which will illustrate this matter very much, and make it intelligible even to those who are not philosophers. The thing I mean is the Sun, which produces rays that are coeval with the cause producing them; as we cannot suppose the Sun to exist without rays: And this example, with the other I have given from the theorems of science, proves this general proposition, that wherever any thing, by the necessity of its nature, produces another thing, both the thing produced and the

cause, or that which produces it, must be co-existent: So that if the cause, be eternal, the production also must be eternal. Now this is the case of the generation of the Son of God ; for as production is essential to the Supreme Being, and as the first production, according to the order of nature, must have been the principle of intelligence, or the Second Person of the Trinity, it was necessary that this production should be co-eval with the First Person of the Trinity, from which it is derived, and consequently co-eternal with him. And in this way, I think the eternal generation is clearly explained, as it is shown that the First Person of the Trinity could not exist without producing the Second. Whoever does not believe this, must believe as Arius did, that *the time* was when our Saviour did not exist ; and that he was produced in the way of common generation here on earth. Now this is a heresy that strikes at the very foundation of the Christian religion, but

which, as I have shown, was an error that men who were not philosophers, would naturally fall into, and was therefore a more general heresy and more predominant than any other that ever was in the Christian church.

And thus, I think, the two fundamental principles of the Christian religion, the doctrine of the Trinity, and of the eternal generation of the Son of God, are clearly explained. And as they are thus made comprehensible by us, they may be believed and ought to be believed; as I think I have shown that they are truths of philosophy as well as of religion. And for the same reason that the Second Person of the Trinity must have been begotten from all eternity of the First, so the Third must have proceeded from the Second.

In this way the eternal procession of the Second and Third Persons of the Trinity from the First, and of all things in the universe from them is clearly explained. Nor, indeed, do I think that, without the doc-

trine of the Trinity, the procession of all things in the universe from the first cause could be otherwise explained. For it is impossible to suppose that all things should have proceeded immediately from the first cause, and promiscuously, without order or arrangement; as that would be making a chaos of the creation. Whereas a more orderly and regular production cannot be imagined than, first, Intelligence, by which the universe was formed;—then the principle of Life and Animation, by which every thing was moved and put in action, and so the universe made a compleat system.

There is one other fundamental doctrine of the Christian religion which I have not yet mentioned. That is the incarnation of our Saviour. But this is not such a mystery, nor so difficult to be understood, as the doctrine of the Trinity: or the eternal generation of the Second Person of the Trinity. For it is only supposing that our Saviour, instead of human intelligence, brought with him to this world that divine



intelligence which belongs to his nature, and which was embodied with the animal and vegetable mind belonging to human nature.

Thus, I think, with the assistance of antient philosophy, I have been able to explain the philosophy of the Christian religion. For, as I have elsewhere observed,\* as it is the best popular religion that ever was, so it is the most philosophical ; nor, indeed, do I think that the philosophy of it can be well explained, or even comprehended, without the assistance of antient philosophy. To a man who has not studied the system of the universe, as it is delivered to us in the antient books of philosophy, the doctrine of the Trinity must be a most incomprehensible mystery ; for he never can comprehend how the *one* should be *three*, and the *three one*. Whereas from these antient books of philosophy, he may learn that the whole system of nature is composed of *one in the ma-*

\* Vol. 3. p. 189

ny, and *many in the one*.\* So that, as I have observed, the Trinity, if it had not been composed in that way, would have been disconform to the rest of the system of the universe. Now, if a man cannot comprehend the doctrine of the Trinity, he cannot believe in it, nor consequently can he believe that fundamental principle of the Christian religion, that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and the Second Person of the Trinity ; and his eternal generation will be equally incomprehensible by him, unless he has learned that the *production* of an eternal being is eternal as well as the being who is the *author of the production*. The study, therefore, of antient philosophy ought to be very much encouraged by the church, as without it a man can only understand the popular part of the Christian religion, but not the philosophical : So that he cannot be said to be admitted into the *Sanc-tum Sanctorum*, nor to know so much as Plato learned in Egypt of the philosophy

\* See this enlarged upon in p. 45. of this volume.

of Christianity ; I mean the doctrine of the Trinity.

There are, I know, who think that we do not treat the mysteries of our religion with sufficient reverence, when we examine them so curiously ; but that we ought to receive and believe them as revealed to us by God, without any such examination. To this I have already given an answer, that we cannot truly believe what we do not comprehend or understand, though we may profess to believe it. Now there is the mystery of the Trinity ;—of the eternal generation of the Son of God, the only begotten of the Father ;—and of his incarnation ;—all fundamental doctrines of Christianity, (particularly the doctrine of the Trinity, without which we cannot, as I have said, comprehend how Jesus Christ should be the Son of God,) but which cannot be comprehended nor believed without some knowledge of philosophy. It is for this reason I have said\* that the Christian religion is

\* Vol. 5. p. 120

a philosophical religion, more than any religion that ever was in the world. But it is a popular religion at the same time ; and I think I have shown it to be the best popular religion that ever was. Now, though a man may not have cultivated his intellect enough, to understand the philosophical part of the Christian religion, yet if he believe that Jesus Christ was the Son of God, (though he may not be able to explain how he should be so, not understanding the doctrine of the Trinity,) and that he came to this world, and took upon him the human form in order to save man from his fallen state ;—and if he likewise believe that, if he practices the precepts of the gospel, particularly that precept which recommends to us the love of God and of man, as the fundamental duty of a Christian, he shall be happy in the next life : whereas, if he lives a wicked and irreligious life, he shall be punished in the next world ;—He may be reckoned a Christian, and will have his reward in the next world ; though, as our Saviour has told

us, "That in his Father's house there are many mansions", I am persuaded he will not enjoy there so much happiness, as those who have cultivated their intelligence to such a degree as to understand those fundamental doctrines of Christianity, which we call *mysteries*, and whose practice of religion is suitable to their understanding of it. For as a man is an intellectual creature and as intelligence is predominant and the governing principle in his nature, it is evident that the perfection of his intelligence particularly in matters of the most sublime speculation, such as things divine, must be the perfection of his nature.



EXTRACT  
FROM BISHOP STILLINGFLEET'S  
VINDICATION  
OF THE  
DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY.  
P. 214—217.

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*Clemens Alexandrinus*\* owns not only, the *Essential Attributes of God to belong to the Son*; but that there is one *Father of all*, and one *Word over all*, and one *Holy Ghost who is every where*.

And he thinks, *Plato borrowed his three Principles from Moses*†; that his second was the *Son*, and his third the *Holy Spirit*.

Even *Origen* himself highly commends *Moses* above *Plato*, ‡ in his most undoubted

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\* *Clemens* *Pæd.* l. 3. c. 7.

† *Str.* l. 4. p. 517. *Prof.* p. 68.

‡ *Pæd.* l. 1. c. 6. *Str.* l. 5. p. 598. *Orig.* c. *Cels.* l. 1. p. 16. l. 4. p. 198. l. 6. p. 275. 279. &c. 308. l. 7. p. 351. 371.

writings, and saith, *that Numenius went beyond Plato, and that he borrowed out of the Scriptures*; and so he saith, *Plato did in other places*; but he adds, *that the doctrines were better delivered in Scripture, than in his artificial dialogues*. Can any one that hath the least reverence for writers of such authority and zeal for the Christian doctrine, imagine that they wilfully corrupted it in one of the chief articles of it; and brought in new speculations against the sense of those books, which at the same time, they professed to be the only rule of their faith? Even where they speak most favourably of the *Platonic Trinity*, they suppose it to be borrowed from *Moses*.

And therefore *Numenius* said,\* *That Moses and Plato did not differ about the first principles*; and *Theodoret* mentions *Numenius* as one of those, who said, *Plato understood the Hebrew Doctrine in Egypt*; and

\* Clem. Alex. Str. 1. Euseb. Præp. l. 8. Theod. Sermon. 1.

during his thirteen years stay there, it is hardly possible to suppose, he should be ignorant of the *Hebrew Doctrine*, about the *first principles*, which he was so inquisitive after, especially among nations, who pretended to antiquity.

And the *Platonic notion of the Divine essence enlarging itself to three Hypostases*, is considerable on these accounts :

1. That it is deliver'd with so much assurance by the opposers of Christianity ; such as *Plotinus*, *Porphyrus*, *Proclus* and others were known to be, and they speak with no manner of doubt concerning it ; as may be seen in the passages of *Porphyrus* preserved by *S. Cyril*\* and others.

2. That they took it up from no revelation ;† but as a notion in itself agreeable enough ; as appears by the passages in *Pla-*

\* *Cyrl. c. Jul. l. 1. & l. 8.*

† Though probably derived from the Hebrew Scriptures, its origin seems to have been unknown to the later Platonists, and not professed by the more ancient. EDIT.

to and others concerning it. They never suspected it to be liable to the charge of *nonsense*, and *contradictions*, as our modern *unitarians* charge the Trinity with; although their notion as represented by *Porphyrus* be as liable to it. How came these men of wit and sense, to hit upon, and be so fond of such absurd principles which lead to the belief of mysterious *nonsense*, and *impossibilities*, if these men [the Unitarians] may be trusted?

3. That the nations most renowned for antiquity and deep speculations, did light upon the same doctrine, about a Trinity of *Hypostases* in the Divine essence. To prove this I shall not refer to the *Trismegistick books*, or the *Chaldee oracles*, or any doubtful authorities; but *Plutarch*\* asserts the *three Hypostases to have been received among the Persians*, and *Porphyrus*, and *Jamblicus*, say the same of the *Egyptians*.

\* Plutarch. de Isid. & Osird. p. 369. ed. Fr. Eusebius. Præp. E. l. 3. c. 11. Jamb. de Myst. Sect. 8. c. 2.

4. That this *Hypostasis* did maintain its reputation so long in the world. For we find it continued to the time of *Macrobius* ;\* who mentions it as a reasonable notion, viz. of one *supreme Being, Father of all, and a Mind proceeding from it, and soul* [or rather, *life*†] *from Mind*. Some have thought that the Platonists made two created Beings, to be two of the *Divine Hypostases* ; but this is contrary to what *Plotinus* and *Porphyrus* affirm concerning it, and it is hard to give an account, how they should then be essentially different from creatures, and be *Hypostases in the Divine essence*.

\* *Macrobius in Som. Scipion. l. 1. c. 14.*

† *Ψυχη του κοσμου, anima mundi*, the Spirit of life and animation pervading the world. See Lord Monboddo's illustration, p. 72, 73. 76. 83. In the Nicene Creed, the third Person of the Holy Trinity is called "the lord and giver of *life*." And this title is founded on the influence of the Holy Spirit, in the creation of the world, (Gen. i. 2. ii. 7.) in the miraculous conception, in the raising of Christ from the dead, and in the general resurrection. (Rom. viii. 11.) Job says, "the



Spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life." (xxxiii. 4.) From this life-giving influence, perhaps the Holy Spirit derives his name in Hebrew רוּחַ, in Greek Πνευμα, in Latin "spiritus," the term in each language denoting the specific attribute of life. EDIT.

THE  
ATHANASIAN CREED

CLEARED FROM CONTRADICTIONS.\*

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**I** Now come to the last thing I proposed, *viz.* to shew, *That it is no contradiction to assert three Persons in the Trinity and but one God*; and for that purpose, I shall examine the charge of *Contradictions* on the *Athanasian Creed*. † *The sum of the first Articles, say they, is this, The one true God is three distinct Persons, and three distinct Persons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are the one true God. Which is plainly, as if a man should say, Peter, James, and John, being three Persons, are one man; and one Man is these three distinct Persons, Peter,*

\* Bishop Stillingfleet's Vindication of the Doctrine of the Trinity, chap. VII.

†. Notes on Athanasius's Creed.

James, and John. *Is it not now a ridiculous attempt as well as a barbarous indignity, to go about thus to make asses of all mankind, under pretence of teaching them a Creed.* This is very freely spoken, with respect, not merely to our Church, but the Christian world, which owns this Creed to be a *just and true explication* of the Doctrine of the Trinity. But there are some creatures as remarkable for their untoward kicking, as for their stupidity. And is not this great skill in these matters, to make such a parrallel between the *three persons in the Godhead*, and *Peter, James, and John*? Do they think there is no difference between an infinitely perfect being, and such finite limited creatures as individuals among men are? Do they suppose the divine nature capable of such *division and separation* by individuals, as human nature is? No, they may say, *but ye who hold three persons must think so.* For what reason? We do assert three persons, but it is on the account of divine revelation, and in such a manner, as the divine

nature is capable of it. For it is a good rule of *Boethius*, *Talia sunt prædicata, qualia subjecta permiserint*. We must not say that there are persons in the Trinity, but in such a manner as is agreeable to the divine nature ; and if that be not capable of *division* and *separation*, then the persons must be in the same undivided essence. The next article is, neither confounding the persons, nor dividing the substance. *But how can we, say they, not confound the persons that have, as ye say, but one numerical Substance ? And how can we but divide the substance, which we find in three distinct divided persons ?* I think the terms *numerical substance* not very proper in this case ; and I had rather use the language of the *Fathers*, than of the *schools* ; and some of the most judicious and learned *Fathers* would not allow the terms of *one numerical substance* to be applied to the divine essence. For their notion was, that *number* was only proper for compound beings, but God being a pure and simple

being was *one by nature and not by number*, as \*St. Basil speaks (as is before observed) because he is not compounded, nor hath any besides himself to be reckoned with him. But because there are different *hypostases*, therefore they allowed the use of *number* about them, and so we may say the hypostases or persons are *numerically different*; but we cannot say that the essence is *one numerically*. But why must they *confound the persons, if there be but one essence*? The relative properties cannot be confounded; for the Father cannot be the Son, nor the Son the Father; and on these the difference of persons is founded. For, there can be no difference, as to essential properties, and therefore all the difference, or rather distinction must be from those that are relative. A person of itself imports no *relation*, but the person of the Father or of the Son must; and these relations cannot be confounded with one another. And if the Father cannot be the Son, nor the Son

\* Basil. Ep. 141.



the Father, then they must be distinct from each other. But how? *By dividing the substance?* That is impossible in a substance that is indivisible. It may be said, *That the essence of created beings is indivisible, and yet there are divided persons.* I grant it, but then a created essence is capable of different accidents and qualities to divide one person from another, which cannot be supposed in the divine Nature; and withall the same power which gives a being to a created Essence, gives it a separate and divided existence from all others. As when *Peter, James, and John* received their several distinct personalities from God; at the same time he gave them their separate beings from each other, although the same essence be in them all.

*But how can we but divide the substance which we see in three distinct divided persons?* The question is, whether the distinct properties of the persons do imply a *division* of the *Substance*? We deny that the *Persons* are *divided* as to the *substance*, because

that is impossible to be divided ; but we say they are and must be distinguished as to those incommunicable properties which make the Persons distinct. The *essential properties* are incapable of being divided, and the *relations* cannot be confounded ; so that there must be *one undivided substance* and yet *three distinct persons*.

*But every person must have his own proper substance ; and so the substance must be divided if there be three persons.* That every person must have a *substance* to support his subsistence is not denied, but the question is, whether that *substance* must be *divided* or not. We say, where the substance will bear it, as in created Beings, a person hath a separate substance, *i. e.* the same nature diversified by accidents, qualities, and a separate existence, but where these things cannot be, there the *same essence* must remain undivided, but with such *relative properties* as cannot be confounded. *But may not the same undivided substance be communicated to three divided persons ; so as that*

*each person may have his own proper substance, and yet the divine essence be in itself undivided?* This is not the case before us. For the question upon the creed is, Whether the substance can be divided? And here it is allowed to remain undivided. *Yes in itself, but it may be divided in the persons.* The substance, we say, is incapable of being divided any way; and to say, that a substance wholly undivided in itself is yet divided into as many proper and peculiar substances, as there are persons, doth not at all help our understanding in this matter; but if no more be meant, as is expressly declared, than *That the same one divine nature is wholly and entirely communicated by the eternal Father to the eternal Son, and by Father and Son to the eternal Spirit, without any division or separation;* it is the same which all *Trinitarians* assert. And it is a great pity, that any *new phrases* or ways of expression should cause unreasonable heats among those who are really of the same mind. For those who oppose

the expressions of *three distinct substances* as new and dangerous ; yet grant, *that it is one peculiar prerogative of the divine nature and substance, founded in its infinite, and therefore transcendent perfection, whereby it is capable of residing in more persons than one : and is accordingly communicated from the Father to the Son and Holy Ghost ; but this is done without any division or multiplication.* Now if both parties mean what they say, where lies the difference ? It is sufficient for my purpose that they are agreed, that there can be no *division* as to the *divine essence* by the distinction of persons. And so this passage of the *Athanasian Creed* holds good, *Neither confounding the Persons nor dividing the substance.*

The next article, as it is set down in the *notes on Athanasius's Creed*, is a contradiction to this. For there it runs, " There is one substance of the Father, another of the Son, another of the Holy Ghost." They might well charge it with *contradictions* at this rate. But that is a plain mistake for

*person* ; for there is no other variety in the copies but this, that *Bayfius* his Greek copy hath ὑπόστασις, and that of *Constantinople* πρὸς ὅσον, but all the Latin copies *persona*. But what consequence do they draw from hence? *Then*, say they, *the Son is not the Father, nor is the Father the Son, nor the Holy Ghost either of them*. If they had put in *person*, as they ought to have done, it is what we do own. And what follows? *If the Father be not the Son, and yet is the one true God, then the Son is not the one true God, because he is not the Father*. The *one true God* may be taken two ways: 1. The *one true God*, as having the *true divine nature* in him, and so the *Father* is the *one true God* ; but not exclusive of the *Son*, if he have the same *divine nature*. 2. The *one true God*, as having the *divine nature* so wholly in himself, as to make it incommunicable to the *Son* ; so we do not say, that the *Father* is the *one true God*, because this must exclude the *Son* from being *God* ; which the *Scripture* assures us that he is ;



and therefore though the Son be not the Father, nor the Father the Son, yet the Son may be the *one true God* as well as the Father, because they both partake of the *same divine nature*, so that there is no contradiction in this, *that there is but one true God, and one of the persons is not the other*. For that supposes it impossible, that there should be three persons in the same nature ; but if the distinction of *nature* and *persons* be allowed, as it must be by all that understand any thing of these matters, then it must be granted, that although one person cannot be another, yet they may have the same common essence. As for instance, let us take their own, *Peter, James, and John*. What pleasant arguing would this be, *Peter* is not *James* nor *John*, nor *James* nor *John* are *Peter*, but *Peter* hath the true essence of a man in him ; and the true essence is but one and indivisible ; and therefore *James* and *John* cannot be true men, because *Peter* hath the *one and indivisible essence* of a man in him ? But they will say, *We cannot*

*say that Peter is the one true man, as we say, that the Father is the one true God. Yes, we say the same in other words, for he can be said to be the one true God in no other respect, but as he hath the one true divine essence. All the difference lies [in this,] that a finite nature is capable of division, but an infinite is not.*

It follows, “ The Godhead of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, is all one, the glory equal, the majesty co-eternal.”

To this they say, *that this article doth impugn and destroy itself. How so? For, if the glory and majesty be the same in number, then it can be neither equal, nor co-eternal. Not equal for it is the same, which equals never are, nor co-eternal for that intimates that they are distinct. For nothing is co-eternal, nor co-temporary with itself.*

There is no appearance of difficulty or contradiction in this, if the distinction of persons is allowed; for the three persons

may be well said to be *co-equal and co-eternal*; and if we honour the Son as we honour the Father we must give equal glory to him.

But one great point of contradiction remains, *viz.* “So that the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God, and yet there are not three Gods, but one God.”

First, they say, *This is as if a man should say, the Father is a person, the Son a person, and the Holy Ghost a person, yet there are not three persons, but one person.* How is this possible, if a person doth suppose some *peculiar property*, which must distinguish him from all others? And how can three persons be one person, unless three incommunicable properties may become one communicated property to three persons? But they are aware of a distinction in this case, *viz.* that the term God is used *personally*, when it is said *God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost*; but when it is said, *There are not three Gods, but one God, the term God is used essenti-*

ally, and therefore comprehends the whole three persons, so that there is neither a grammatical nor arithmetical contradiction\*. And what say our Unitarians to this? Truly, no less, *Than that the remedy is worse, (if possible) than the disease.* Nay then, we are in a very ill case. But how I pray doth this appear? 1. Say they, *Three personal Gods, and one essential God make four Gods; if the essential God be not the same with the personal Gods: and though he is the same, yet since they are not the same with one another, but distinct, it follows, that there are three Gods, i. e. three personal Gods.* 2. *It introduces two sorts of Gods, three personal and one essential. But the Christian religion knows and owns but one, true, and most high God of any sort.* So far then, we are agreed, *That there is but one, true, and most high God; and that because of the perfect unity of the divine essence, which can be no more than one,*

\* Notes on Athanasius's Creed, p. 13.

and where there is but *one divine essence*, there can be but *one true God*, unless we can suppose a God without an essence, and that would be a strange sort of God. He would be a *personal God* indeed in their critical sense of a *person* for a shape or appearance. *But may not the same essence be divided?* That I have already shewed to be impossible. Therefore we cannot make so many *personal Gods*, because we assert one and the same essence in the three persons of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. *But they are distinct, and therefore must be distinct Gods, since every one is distinct from the other.* They are distinct as to *personal properties*, but not as to *essential attributes*; which are and must be the same in all: So that here is but one essential God, and three persons.

*But after all, why do we assert three persons in the Godhead?* Not because we find them in the *Athanasian creed*; but because the Scripture hath revealed that there are *three*, Father, Son and Holy Ghost; to



whom the divine nature and attributes are given. This we verily believe, that the Scripture hath revealed ; and that there are a great many places, of which, we think no tolerable sense can be given without it, and therefore we assert this doctrine on the same grounds, on which we believe the Scriptures. And if there are *three Persons* which have the *divine nature* attributed to them ; what must we do in this case ? must we cast off the *unity of the divine essence* ? No, that is too frequently and plainly asserted for us to call it into question. Must we reject those Scriptures which attribute divinity to the Son and Holy Ghost, as well as to the Father ? That we cannot do, unless we cast off those books of Scripture, wherein those things are contained.

*But why do we call them persons, when that term is not found in Scripture, and is of a doubtful sense ?* The true account whereof I take to be this. It is observed by *Facundus Hermianensis*,\* that the Chris-

\* Facund. l. p. 19. Ed. Serm.

*tian Church received the doctrine of the Trinity before the terms of three persons were used. But Sabellianism was the occasion of making use of the name of persons. It is true, that the Sabellians did not dislike our sense of the word person, (which they knew was not the Church's sense,) as it was taken for an appearance, or an external quality ; which was consistent enough, with their hypothesis, who allowed but one real person with different manifestations. That this was their true opinion, appears from the best account we have of their doctrine, from the first rise of Sabellianism. The foundations of it were laid in the earliest and most dangerous heresies in the Christian Church, viz. that which is commonly called by the name of the Gnostics, and that of the Cerinthians and Ebionites. For how much soever they differed from each other in other things ; yet they both agreed in this, that there was no such thing as a Trinity, consisting of Father,*

*Son, and Holy Ghost* ; but that all was but different *appearances* and *manifestations* of God to mankind. In consequence whereof, the *Gnostics* denied the very *humanity* of Christ, and the *Cerinthians* and *Ebionites* his *divinity*. But both these sorts, were utterly rejected in the communion of the Christian Church ; and no such thing as *Sabellianism* was found within it. Afterwards, there arose some persons who started the same opinion within the Church : the first we meet with of this sort, are those mentioned by *Theodoret*,\* *Epigonus*, *Cleomenes*, and *Noetus*, from whom they were called *Noetians* ; not long after, *Sabellius* broached the same doctrine in *Pentapolis*, and the parts thereabouts ; which made *Dionysius of Alexandria*† appear so early and so warmly against it. But he happening to let fall some expressions, as though he asserted an *inequality of hypostases in the Godhead*, complaint was made of it to

\* Theod. hæret. Fab. l. 2. c. 3.

† Athan. de Sent. Dionys. p. 558.

*Dionysius* then Bishop of Rome, who thereupon explained that, which he took to be the true sense of the Christian Church in this matter. Which is still preserved in *Athanasius* :\* Therein he disowns the *Sabellian doctrine*, which confounded the *Father, Son, and Holy Ghost*, and made them to be the same ; and withal, he rejected those who held *three distinct and separate hypostases* ; as the *Platonists*, and after them the *Marcionists* did. *Dionysius of Alexandria*, when he came to explain himself, agreed with the others and asserted the Son to be *of the same substance with the Father* ; as *Athanasius*† hath proved at large : but yet he said, *That if a distinction of hypostases were not kept up, the doctrine of the Trinity would be lost* ; as appears by an epistle of his in *St. Basil*.‡ *Athanasius* saith, *That the heresy of Sabellius lay in making the Father and Son to be only differ-*

\* *Athanas. de Decret. Fi dei Nicen. p. 275.*

† *Athanas de Sent. Dionys.*

‡ *Basil de Sp. Sancto c. 29.*

*ent names of the same person ; so that in one respect he is the Father,\* and in another the Son. Gregory Nazianzen† in opposition to Sabellianism, saith, We must believe one God, and three hypostases ; and commends Athanasius for preserving the true mean, in asserting the unity of nature, and the distinction of properties. St. Basil saith, ‡ That the Sabellians made but one person of the Father and Son : that in name they confessed the Son ; but in reality they denied him. In another place||, that the Sabellians asserted but one hypostasis in the divine nature ; but that God took several persons upon him ; as occasion required : sometimes that of a Father, at other times that of a Son;§ and so of the Holy Ghost. And to the same purpose in other places he saith, \*\* That there are*

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\* Athan. Orat. 4. c. 1. Arian. p. 456.

† Greg. Nazian. Or. 1. p. 15, 17.

‡ Or. XXI. p. 380

|| Basil Hom. 27. p. 602. 604.

§ Basil. Epist. 141. \*\* Epist. 64. 391.



*distinct hypostases with their peculiar properties ; which being joined with the unity of nature make up the true confession of faith.*

There were some who would have but one hypostasis ; whom he opposes with great vehemency ; and the reason he gives, is, *that then they must make the persons to be mere names ; which is Sabellianism.* And he saith, *that if our notions of distinct persons have no certain foundation they are mere names, such as Sabellius called persons.* But by this foundation he doth not mean any distinct essences, but the incommunicable properties belonging to them, as *Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.*

It is plain from hence, that the necessity of asserting three hypostases, came from thence, that otherwise they could not so well distinguish themselves from the *Sabellians* whose doctrine they utterly disowned ; as well as *Arianism* and *Judaism* ; and it appears by the testimonies of *Athanasius*,\* *Gregory Nazianzen*,† and *St. Basil*,‡ that

\*Athanas. p. 567.

† Greg. Naz. p. 16.

‡ Basil. Hom. 27.

they looked on one *as bad as the other*; and they commonly join *Judaism*, and *Sabellianism* together.

But yet there arose difficulties whether they were to hold one *hypostasis* or three. The former insisted on the generally received sense of *hypostasis* for *substance* or *essence*; and therefore they could not hold three *hypostases* without three *distinct essences* as the *Platonists* and *Marcionists* held. Upon this a synod was called at *Alexandria* to adjust this matter, where both parties were desired to explain themselves.\* Those who held three hypostases were asked, † *Whether they maintained three hypostases as the Arians did, of different substances, and separate subsistences, as mankind and other creatures are? Or as other heretics, three principles or three Gods?* All which they stedfastly denied. Then they were asked, *Why they used those terms?* They answered, *Because they believed the Holy Trinity to be more than mere names;*

\* Ruffin. p. 211. hist. l. i.

† Athan. Ep. ad Antioch, p. 577.

and that the *Father*, and *Son*, and *Holy Ghost*, had a real subsistence belonging to them ; but still they held but one *Godhead*, one principle, and the *Son* of the same substance with the *Father* ; and the *Holy Ghost* not to be a creature, but to bear the same proper and inseparable essence with the *Father* and the *Son*. Then the other side were asked, When they asserted but one hypostasis, whether they held with Sabellius or not ; and that the *Son* and *Holy Ghost* had no essence or subsistence ? Which they utterly denied ; but said, that their meaning was, *That hypostasis was the same with substance* ; and by one hypostasis, they intended no more, but that the *Father*, *Son*, and *Holy Ghost* were of the same individual substance ; (for the words are, διὰ τὰ ταυτὸτητα τῆς φύσεως) and so they held but one *Godhead* and one divine nature : and upon these terms they agreed. From whence it follows, that the notion of three hypostases, as it was received in the Christian Church, was to be understood so as to be consistent with the individual unity

of the *divine essence*. And the great rule of the Christian Church was to keep in the middle, between the doctrines of *Sabellius* and *Arius*; and so by degrees, the notion of three *hypostases* and one *essence* was looked on in the eastern Church, as the most proper discrimination of the orthodox from the *Sabellians* and *Arians*.

But the Latin Church was not so easily brought to the use of three *hypostases*, because they knew no other sense of it, but for *substance* or *essence*; and they all denied that there was any more than one *divine substance*, and therefore they rather embraced the word *persona*; and did agree in the name of *persons*, as most proper to signify their meaning, which was, *that there were three which had distinct subsistences, and incommunicable properties, and one and the same divine essence*. And since the notion of it is so well understood, to signify such a peculiar sense, I see no reason why any should scruple the use of it. As to its not being used in *Scripture*, *Socinus* him-

self despises it, and allows it to be no good reason. For when *Franciscus Davides* objected, *That the terms of essence and person were not in Scripture* ; *Socinus* tells him, \**That they exposed their cause who went upon such grounds ; and that if the sense of them were in Scripture, it was no matter whether the terms were or not.*

Having thus cleared the notion of three persons, I return to the sense of Scripture about these matters. And our Unitarians tell us, that we ought to interpret Scripture otherwise. How doth that appear ? They give us very little encouragement to follow their interpretations, which are so new, so forced, so different from the general sense of the Christian world, and which I may say, reflect so highly on the honour of Christ and his Apostles, i. e. by making use of such expressions, which if they do not mean what to honest and sincere minds they appear to do, must be intended (according to them) to set up *Christ*, a mere man to be a

\* Socin. Vol. I. p. 778



*God.* And if such a thought as this could enter into the mind of a thinking man, it would tempt him to suspect much more as to those writings than there is the least colour or reason for. Therefore these bold inconsiderate writers sought to reflect on the consequence of such sort of arguments, and if they have any regard to Christianity, not to trifle with Scripture as they do.

But say they, \**The question only is, whether we ought to interpret Scripture when it speaks of God, according to reason or not, that is, like fools or like wise men? Like wise men no doubt, if they can hit upon it, but they go about it as untowardly as ever men did. For is this to interpret Scripture like wise men, to take up some novel interpretations, against the general sense of the Christian Church from the Apostles' times? Is this to act like wise men, to raise objections against the authority of the books, they cannot answer; and to cry out of false copies and translations without reason, and*

\* Notes on Athanasius Creed. p. 13.

to render all places suspicious, which make against them? Is this to *interpret Scripture like wise men*, to make our Saviour affect to be thought a *God*, when he knew himself to be a *mere man*, and by their own confession, had not his *divine authority* and *power* conferred upon him? And to make his Apostles set up the worship of a creature, when their design was to take away the worship of all such, *who by nature are not Gods*? Is this like *wise men* to tell the world, *\*that these were only such Gods, whom they had set up, and God had not appointed*; as though there were no real idolatry but in *giving divine worship* without God's command.

\* Answer to my sermon, p. 14.

## SERMON.\*



I TIM. III. 9.

HOLDING THE MYSTERY OF THE FAITH IN A PURE  
CONSCIENCE.

**A**LL the use I design to make of these words is to introduce a discourse upon the subject of the *Athanasian Creed*. It is appointed by our church to be read several times in the year, and amongst the rest on *Trinity Sunday*; it contains an excellent Summary of the Christian faith, concerning the Trinity of persons in the Godhead, and the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ; and therefore should not be repeated without understanding; and some persons are

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\* By MATTHEW HORBERY, D. D. Preached on  
Trinity Sunday.

apt to express a dislike of it, though they pretend to believe the doctrines which it contains. Upon all which accounts it cannot be improper to make some observations upon it, partly to vindicate its use, and partly to explain its meaning.

It is no wonder that men, who disbelieve both the doctrine of the Trinity, and the incarnation of the Son of God, should treat this exposition of these doctrines with contempt and scorn. Though this may be no very decent part with respect to others, it is however a *consistent* one with regard to themselves, as it is agreeable to their own principles. But with such men as these at present I have no concern; for be it remembered, that I am not now to prove the truth of these doctrines, but the expediency of this *Creed*; and the debate is with such only, as believe the Scripture to be the word of God, and that this *Creed* contains nothing in general, that is contrary to it, but yet upon other accounts appear to dislike it. The

proper enquiry therefore is, whether this dislike be founded in reason.

Now the exceptions of such men as these against this ancient exposition of the catholic faith, may, I believe, be reduced to *two*; the *first* whereof pretends that it is *unintelligible*, so that people, at least common people, cannot understand it; and the *second*, that it is *uncharitable*, as it excludes every man from Salvation, who does not believe faithfully all the abstruse points of this *Creed*.

With regard to the first article, the difficulty of understanding the *Athanasian Creed*, it ought indeed in equity to be supposed, that they who make this complaint, have no negligence to charge themselves withal in this affair. When a man complains, that he cannot understand a composition, the very complaint seems to imply, that he has considered it, and endeavoured to understand it. For otherwise the fault may be owing, not to the composition, but to his own neglect. It should therefore be pre-



sumed, that when persons complain, that they don't understand this Creed, they are able to acquit themselves of all blame, or suspicion of negligence in the case. And yet perhaps if we were to enquire of one of these complainers, it would not be easy for him to recollect, that ever in his whole life, he seriously sat down for one half hour, to study and consider it. But if he asserts that he has fairly considered it, and yet is not able to understand it, we must go farther, and examine whether there be not still some mistake at the bottom.

For it is carefully to be observed, that there is a great difference between understanding the meaning of the *Creed*, or the doctrine which it sets forth; and comprehending the thing itself, or the mystery, to which this doctrine relates. It is easy enough, for instance, to understand the Catholic faith, to understand the orthodox doctrine, concerning the Trinity which the Scripture teaches, and the Church has always received: but it is so far from being

easy, that it is impossible to comprehend the mystery of the Trinity itself, or to conceive the manner how three Persons are one God, or how the one God subsists in three Persons. And it may happen, by not attending to this distinction, and through a little confusion of ideas, that a man may imagine he does not understand the *doctrine* of the *Creed*, only because he does not understand the *mystery* of the *Trinity*. This latter, it is certain, is above his understanding. But is that any fault of the *Creed*? take the *Creed* away; and will he understand the mystery of the Trinity one jot the better; or will any other *Creed*, which the wit of man can devise, give him a clear conception of this mysterious truth, and enable a finite capacity to comprehend an infinite object? But that the *meaning* of the *Creed*, or the doctrine which it teaches, is not so dark and difficult as some men seem to apprehend, or affect to represent it, I shall now shew more distinctly, by laying a brief explication of it before you.

The two principal points inculcated in this *Creed*, are the doctrines of the Trinity, and of the Incarnation : that is, it teaches us, that there are three divine Persons who are the one true God, and that one of these, *viz.* the Son, was really and truly made man. It is not the business of *Creeds* to prove the *truth* of doctrines ; *that* must be determined by Scripture. But the use and intent of a *Creed* is to put a *form of sound words* into the mouths of Christians, that they may be able to make a proper confession of their faith ; and also to guard and secure that faith against the artifices and evasions of hereticks. Supposing therefore the *truth* of these doctrines, and resting *that* upon the authority of Scripture, the *Creed* before us begins with shewing their *importance*, or the necessity there is that every Christian should believe them. “ Whosoever will be “ saved ; before all things it is necessary “ that he hold the Catholic faith. Which “ faith, except every one do keep whole “ and undefiled, without doubt he shall pe-

“ rish everlastingly.” The want of charity, which is charged upon this introduction, is to be considered hereafter; at present we are concerned only with its sense; which can hardly be rendered plainer by a comment. Every Christian who is desirous of salvation, and expects it upon the terms laid down by Jesus Christ, in his Gospel, must first of all, and before all things, embrace and hold fast the Chrisitan faith; the faith which was taught by Christ and his Apostles, which was once delivered unto the Saints, and which has always, and every where, been received by the whole Catholic, or universal Church. And one article of this faith, an article of great importance as it nearly affects our practice, our worship, and our prayers, is concerning the doctrine of three divine Persons in the unity of the Godhead, in whose name we were baptized, and to whose service we were then devoted. Now with regard to this point, “ the Catholic faith is this, that we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in unity.”

That is, maintaining at the same time the distinction of the persons, and the unity, or sameness, of nature; believing (as our \*church expresses it) “that in unity of this “Godhead there be three persons of one “substance, power, and eternity; the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.”

This is the doctrine of the Trinity, which the Catholick church has always taught; and if men could have been content with this short and plain account of it, there would have been less occasion for the particular explications that follow. But as various Hereticks arose, who in diverse manners attempted to corrupt and deprave it, therefore the *Creed* goes on more explicitly to guard and secure it against their corruptions. Some, for instance, (whose names are not worth repeating,) held Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, to be but *one person*; that it is one and the same person who is called by these three names; and that consequently

\* Art. 1. Of Faith in the holy Trinity.



the Father and the Holy Ghost were made Flesh, and died for us, as well as the Son. Others again, instead of thus confounding the divine persons, ran into a contrary extreme, and divided the substance; pretending that the substance, or nature, of the Father was different from that of the Son, and superior to it; and the substance or nature of the Son superior to that of the Holy Ghost. In opposition to both these errors, the *Creed* proceeds to instruct us to preserve and maintain the distinction of *three persons*, without confounding them into *one person*; and the *unity* of substance, without dividing it into *three substances*: “neither confounding the persons, nor dividing the substance. For there is one person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Ghost:” three distinct persons: “but the Godhead,” the nature, essence, or substance, “of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost is all one; the glory equal, the Majesty

“ co-eternal.” To explain this a little farther,—

“ Such as the Father is, such is the Son ;  
 “ and such is the Holy Ghost,” as to the nature or essence, and in all the essential perfections of the divine nature. One of these perfections is absolutely necessary uncreated existence ; and in this perfection the divine persons are all alike ; “ the Father uncreated, the Son uncreate, and the Holy Ghost uncreate :” none of them creatures, made out of nothing, or produced into being by the will and power of another ; but all existing in the sublimest sense of existence, which is that of necessity of nature. Another perfection of the Godhead is immensity, or omnipresence ; and this the *Creed* declares, according to the *Latin Original*, equally belongs to each of the three persons ; “ the Father immense, or omnipresent, the “ the Son immense, and the Holy Ghost “ immense,” for as to our *English* translation, *incomprehensible*, though it contains a true proposition, yet it does not convey

the true meaning of the *Creed*, unless we understand by *incomprehensible*, what cannot be comprehended in space, or included within bounds. Another divine perfection is absolute and proper eternity, without beginning, and without end; and this again the *Creed* ascribes to each of the divine persons, without any difference or inequality: "the Father eternal, the Son eternal, and the Holy Ghost eternal."

If we keep in mind the distinction between divine substance or nature, and divine person, we shall not be at a loss to understand what follows, though perhaps the most puzzling part of the *Creed*. Each of the three persons is eternal, "and yet they are not three eternals;" that is, not three different eternal substances, or natures, which would be three eternal Gods; but one and the same divine eternal substance is common to them all; and therefore in this sense they are "but one eternal." It is the same thing as to Omnipresence, and necessary existence; every one of the divine

persons exists necessarily, and is present everywhere ; and yet they are not three immense, self-existing substances, (which again would make three Gods,) but most intimately united in one and the same substance, which is omnipresent and uncreated ; and this unity of substance, this identity of nature, makes them to be but one God. In the same sense, and upon the same account, though every one of the three divine persons be Almighty, “yet they are not three “Almighties, but one Almighty :” because one and the same Omnipotence is enjoyed and exercised by them all. And as each of them has thus the whole divine nature, and all the perfections of that nature belonging to Him, it must necessarily follow that each is truly and properly God ; and yet since there is, and can be, but one divine nature, “they are not three Gods, but one “God.” To mention but one particular more.—“The Father is Lord, the Son Lord, “and the Holy Ghost Lord :” And yet as they have not three different dominions,

they are “not three Lords, but one Lord ;” possessing and exercising one and the same supreme universal dominion, the kingdom that ruleth over all. We are obliged by the *Christian verity*, the truths which are taught in Scripture, to acknowledge every one of the divine persons “to be God and Lord ;” because they are so represented in Scripture ; and have the titles, the perfections, the operations, and worship of God, ascribed and given to them. At the same time we are forbidden by this religion, (and indeed by true natural religion itself,) to say that there are “three Gods, or three Lords :” For all true religion, and right reason itself, assures us that there is but one God. If these propositions be true, the unavoidable consequence is, that the one God subsists in three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

The *Creed* having thus taught us, that these divine persons have all the same nature, and the same essential perfections, proceeds next to set forth their personal distinction ; shew-



ing that the Father is not the Son, nor the Son the Holy Ghost, nor the Holy Ghost either of the other. The peculiar distinctive personal character of the Father is, that he is *αὐτόθεος*, 'God of himself; first in order, the head and fountain of the Deity; "the Father is made of none," or the Father is of none, neither made, "nor created, nor begotten." The Son is distinguished by this, that He is "of the Father alone;" yet "not made" by him in time, "nor created" out of nothing like a creature; for there never was a time when he was not; "but begotten." The manner of this eternal generation we know nothing of; but as the *Nicene Creed* expresses it, He was "begotten of his Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father." The personal character of the Holy Ghost is, that he "is of the Father," (though not of the Father *alone*, but of the Father,) "and of the Son; yet neither made, nor created, nor begotten," of

or by them, “but proceeding” from them, as the Spirit of both: the *mode*, or manner, of which procession is above our capacities, and consequently a point we have no concern with. These characters then being proper and peculiar to the divine persons, to whom they respectively belong, sufficiently distinguish them from one another, and shew, that “there is one Father, not three Fathers; one Son, not three Sons; one Holy Ghost, not three Holy Ghosts.” But lest this distinction of persons should lead us to suspect some difference or inequality of nature, the *Creed* inculcates once more, before it leaves the subject, their co-equality and co-eternity: “in this Trinity none is afore, or after other,” with regard to duration; “none is greater, or less than another,” with respect to essential dignity; “but the whole three persons are co-eternal together, and co-equal.” This Trinity of persons in the unity of the Godhead is to be adored and worshipped by all Christians; and this doctrine concerning it embraced and held

fast by them, as they tender their everlasting Salvation. “ So that in all things as is aforesaid, the unity in ‘Trinity,’ one God in three persons, “ and the Trinity in unity,” the Trinity of persons in the unity of the divine nature, “ is to be worshipped.” And he that is desirous to preserve himself from every dangerous and destructive error as to this point, let him “ thus think of the Trinity.”

There is another doctrine which is of the foundation of Christianity, any change or alteration whereof affects and alters the very essence of our religion; and *that* relates to the *Incarnation* of the Son of God. To this therefore the *Creed* next proceeds, and declares that “ it is necessary to everlasting Salvation, that we believe rightly the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ.” St. *John* had declared long before, that whosoever *confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is a deceiver and an Antichrist.\**

\* 2 Epist. ver. 7.

If therefore the denial of this doctrine be, in the judgment of an Apostle, a certain mark of an Antichristian spirit, there can be no great rashness in declaring, that the belief of it, upon the known terms of the Gospel, is necessary to Salvation. Now concerning this point the “right faith is *this*, that we believe and confess, that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is both God and Man : God of the substance of the Father, begotten before the worlds ; as has been above declared ; and Man of the substance of his mother, born in the world ;” at the time, and in the manner, related in the Gospels. “Perfect God, and perfect Man ;” in opposition to the vain dreams of some hereticks, some of whom believed him to be only a *made* or *nominal* God ; while others denied the reality of his *Body*, or else his rational *human soul* ; as an antidote against whose pernicious tenets, follow the words,—“of a reasonable soul, and human flesh subsisting ;” that is, he had a human soul and

body both, as other men have. He is, as God, equal to the Father, in nature and essential dignity; but as Man, he is, and must be, his inferior. “Who although he be God and Man,” and has therefore two natures, yet he is not two persons, or two Christs, as some hereticks have falsely imagined, “but one Christ.” One he is, “not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh,” or by changing God into man, which is impossible; “but by taking of the manhood into God;” assuming our human nature, and uniting it with the divine. And this altogether without “confusion of substance,” that is, without any mixture of the divine and human natures, so as to compose a third nature out of both; for the two natures remained distinct, though united in the same person: who is therefore “one altogether, not by confusion of substance, but by unity of person.” There is some resemblance or image of this even in our own frame and constitution; in which two different substances, the body and the soul, are united



without confusion ; and yet so closely and intimately united as to make but one man. This illustration therefore the *Creed* gives us by adding, “ as the reasonable soul and flesh is one man, so God and man is one Christ.”

The remaining articles need no particular explication ; and if those we have been considering have some difficulty in them, it should be remembered, that they are upon the abstrusest and sublimest points of our religion. If other *Creeds* seem more easy, with reference to these points, it is only because they are more *general*, and descend not to such a particular explication. But for that very reason they are liable to this disadvantage, that they are sooner evaded and the true sense of them explained away. And we saw by a late attempt to reconcile the service and offices of our church with the *Arian* tenets, that when they were almost all turned aside by too artful a hand, from their original meaning ; it was, upon second thoughts\*, judged too desperate an

\* The Interpretations of the Athanasian Creed in

undertaking to tamper with the *Creed* before us, which stood the great bulwark and preservative of the Catholic faith. No wonder, therefore, that *Arians* and *Socinians* should rail against it; the wonder is, that men of better principles should join the cry; and upon very slight grounds should endeavour to defame an ancient and valuable exposition of the faith, which they themselves profess to believe. One of their exceptions has been now considered; and to the other I must say a word or two before I conclude.

In the *second* place then they say, that they dislike this *Creed* because it is uncharitable, and excludes every man from Salvation, who does not believe all the abstruse points which it contains. Now the truth is, this *Creed* neither contains *more*, nor more *abstruse* points of faith, than other *Creeds* do. With regard to two articles, which appear to be of the very essence of our religion, it

the first Edition of Dr. *Clarke's Scripture Doctrine*, were in the second and subsequent prudently omitted,

enters indeed into a more minute detail, and is more particular in its explications : but, I speak it upon the authority of wise and learned men,\* the condemning clauses, as they are called, do not extend to these particular explications, but are intended only to secure the general doctrine. And it should seem, that there is no want of charity in declaring, that according to the terms of the Gospel, it is necessary, that Christians believe that there are three divine persons who are one God, and that one of them was truly made man. If any Christian pretends that he *knows* not these things, I would ask him, unto what then were you baptized ? And what, or whose religion do

\* The Commissioners in 1689, thirty eminent Divines, appointed to review and correct the *Liturgy*, close the *Rubric* they had prepared in the following Words,—“ And the condemning Clauses (*viz.* in the “ *Athanasian Creed*,) are to be understood as relating “ only to those who obstinately deny the Substance of “ the Christian Faith.” And since them to the same Purpose Archbp. *Synge*, Dr. *Bennet*, Dr. *Waterland*, Dr. *Randolph*, Mr. *Wheatley*, and others.

you profess? Were you solemnly dedicated to the honour and service of three divine persons? And do you constantly worship them, offering up your prayers and devotions directly to them, sometimes jointly to all, and sometimes separately to each? And can you say after this, that you know not, or believe not, that faith in them is any necessary part of your religion? What is, or can be, necessary in religion, if it be not necessary to believe rightly concerning the very object of your worship, and the God whom you adore? So again with regard to the doctrine of Christ's Incarnation, will you say that you believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and that you hope to be saved through faith in his blood? And can you with any consistency say at the same time, that the doctrine of his Incarnation is a point of little consequence, or that the belief of it is not necessary to Salvation? Is not this to set truth and error, belief and unbelief, upon an equal foot? And to make religion and no religion the same thing?

If therefore these doctrines belong to the foundation of Christianity, if you can make no alteration in them, without altering the very essence of this religion, and changing it into some other thing ; wherein is the *Creed* to be blamed, because it declares them to be thus essential to the faith ; and necessary to Salvation ? The *Creed* lays down a general proposition, that it is necessary to believe the Christian or Catholick faith ; a proposition which might easily be proved, if any Christian, who knows what he says, was hardy enough to deny it. It then gives a particular and circumstantial account of two great articles of this faith, relating to the Trinity and Incarnation. But if any man, merely for want of common good capacity, cannot understand this explication ; the *Creed* condemns him not. It condemns no man's incapacity ; it censures no man's ignorance, provided that ignorance be not wilful ; and then it ought to be censured, because it is without excuse. For really these are points of too great consequence to be



neglected. In short, as St. *Paul* says in another case, that *what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law* ;\* so in this case, what things soever the *Creed* saith, it saith to them whom it may concern ; to them, who may understand it if they will : who want neither the means of instruction, nor capacity to use and apply them ; and whose ignorance, or unbelief, is owing to their own neglect or prejudices, that is, to their own fault. And if the *Creed* condemn such men as these, it may, I suppose, be supported in doing so, both by the reason of mankind, and the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Men are apt enough to be indifferent in matters of religion. The better sort of them indeed will practise the common decencies of life, and perform the offices of humanity, justice, and common morality. They feel the good effects of such behaviour, in the value and esteem which it procures them ;

\* Rom. iii. 19.

and the good order and well-being of the world could not be preserved without it. But one sometimes finds, even in persons of this sort, a wonderful inattention, and a strange indifference, with regard to the first and most fundamental doctrines of their religion. It might possibly be with some view to this kind of conduct, that the compiler of the *Creed* inserted what are called the damnatory clauses. He was desirous to excite their attention, and to rouse them from this unmeaning slumber ; to convince them that something is to be believed, as well as practised ; and that in matters of this importance men should not trifle with God, and their own consciences, and *halt between two opinions*\*. To this purpose he declares that the doctrines he endeavours to explain are necessary to Salvation ; because he thought this consideration most likely to make men serious about them, and engage their attention to them. But the censures,

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\* 1 Kings xviii. 21.

or damnatory clauses, are truly and properly no censures at all ; but only general declarations of the importance of the doctrines, or directions about them ; and when explained, as general declarations must be, with proper allowances and exceptions, very consistent both with truth and charity. “ He that will be saved,” says the compiler, “ must thus think of the Trinity :” which though it may sound harsh, and look like a censure, is in truth nothing more than good advice ; is no more in effect than if he had said, I have now explained the doctrine of the Trinity in a sound and orthodox sense, and I would advise every Christian, who would avoid all dangerous errors in this point, to think of it in this manner : he that is willing to be saved, and upon that account desirous to avoid all damnable heresies, *ita de Trinitate sentiat*, let him thus think of the Trinity.

( This is his advice, and as I cannot conclude with better, it is mine : for though orthodoxy cannot cover, it may prevent, a

*multitude of sins.* Let us therefore hold this mystery of the faith in a pure conscience ; in sincerity of heart, and in righteousness of life : not in hypocrisy, outwardly professing what we do not inwardly believe, for the sake of worldly interest ; nor in unrighteousness, as if a right faith would atone for a wicked life ;—but let us *add to our faith, Virtue*† ; so that we may *adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things ; and that he who is of the contrary part may be ashamed ; having no evil thing to say of us.*§

† 2 Pet. i. 5.

§ Titus ii. 8, 10.

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## EXTRACT

From Bishop BULL's Vindication\* of the Church of  
England. (p. 186—196.)

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### ON THE NICENE FAITH.

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——To obviate the perverse interpretations of hereticks, she [the Church of England] receiveth also that admirable summary of the Christian Faith, which is called the Nicene Creed, but is indeed the entire ancient Creed of the Oriental Churches, together with the necessary additional explications thereof, made by Fathers, both of the council of Nice against Arius, and the council of Constantinople against Macedonius.—The sum of what the Nicene Fathers have added by way of explication to the rule of Faith, is this: That the Son of God is *no creature, but very God, subsisting in the very substance, essence, and nature of his Father*. Now although many of those ancient writers have let fall such things (especially in the

\* In a Letter to the Countess of Newbrugh, dated Suddington, in Gloucestershire, Oct. 18, 1671. and published by the Bishop's Son, Mr. Robert Bull, Rector of Tortworth. London. 1719.

heat of contest) as seem not very consistent with the consubstantiality of the Son with the Father, yet the thing itself is professedly and frequently acknowledged by all, *not one excepted*; as I could make appear by many full and express testimonies out of each of them. Indeed *not one of them* (no not Origen himself, charged by so many with heresy in this article) ever dreamt the Son of God (in that nature, wherein he is more properly so called) to be a creature. Nay, Tertullian\* (who flourished about 130 years before the Nicene council, and hath as many unwary expressions in this matter, as any one of those writers whatsoever, yet) delivers this as the received doctrine of the Catholic Church in his time: "That the Three persons of the ever to be adored Trinity, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are of one substance, and one state, and one

\* *ὁμοουσιος* sacramentum, quæ Unitatem in Trinitatem disponit, tres dirigens Patrem, Filium, & Spiritum Sanctum; tres autem non statu, sed gradu, nec substantia sed forma, nec potestate sed specie; unius autem substantiæ, & unius status, & unius potestatis, quia unus Deus, &c. TERTULL. adv. Præx. c. 2.

power, because one God." Where we have not only the full sense, but the very words of the Nicene Fathers in this articlee, which is especially quarrelled at by some no less presumptuous then peevish men. And this he delivers as a doctrine understood to be contained in the Creed or rule of Faith then received in the Church, and which before he had just laid down. Nay, it is apparent from the whole tenor of Tertullian's discourse in that book, that the heresy of Praxeas, asserting the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, to be but one Person, was built upon these two Hypotheses : 1st. That the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost were acknowledged by Catholics to be of one and the same substance and nature. 2ly. That there could not be three distinct persons subsisting in the same divine essence. And, indeed, the main argument made use of by all the several Hereticks, that from the beginning oppugned the *Deity of the Son*, (as asserted by the Catholics) was this that the doctrine was repugnant to the *unity* and simplicity of the divine essence : for which argument

there had not been the least colour, if the Catholicks had only asserted the Son to be a made God, or a creature, (howsoever dignified, yet) of an essence and nature infinitely distant and alien from the nature and essence of the Father.

\* To these let me add one argument, which seems to me irrefragable. There was a famous question\* much disputed in the early days of the Church, even in the first succession from the Apostles, (as it evidently appears from the writings of Justin Martyr, and his scholar Tatian, and others) concerning the manner of the Son's generation, viz. whether it were by a kind of *abscission* from the essence of the Father, or by a *simple communication* of essence, such as is betwixt fire producing other fire, without any diminution of itself, and the fire produced. Now, how impertinent, how frivolous, how even ridiculous had this controversy been,

\* Vide Justin Martyr, Dial cum Tryph. pag. 358. Col. p. 284. & Tatian. Oret. contra Græcos ad calcem Operum Juliani, p. 145. & librum de recta confessione inter Opera Justini, p. 380.

if it had not been taken for granted on all hands, that the Son was begotten of the very *essence* of the Father, and not made of things which were not?

The sum of the explicatory addition made by the Fathers of Constantinople to the articles concerning the Holy Ghost, is this, "That the Holy Ghost is no created Spirit, but a divine Person, or very God, to whom in conjunction with the Father and the Son, divine worship and honour ought to be given." Now we have already shewn, that the Catholic Church, even in Tertullian's time, (so long before the Council of Constantinople) acknowledged the Holy Ghost, no less than the Son to be of one substance, state, and power with the Father.\* And the same Tertullian afterwards in the same book, delivering again the common belief of the Catholics in his time) tells us expressly, "that

### X

\* *Duos Deos & Duos Dominos nunquam ex ore nostro proferimus, non quasi non et Pater Deus, & Spiritus Sanctus Deus, & Deus unusquisque &c.* Tertull. adv. Prax. cap. 13. n. 73. ex edit. Pamellii.



the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God, and every one of them is God." And how many testimonies, out of the most ancient Fathers, might I here heap together? But it is needless; for as long as the Sacrament of Baptism, as it was appointed by Christ to be administered in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, shall continue in the Church, (that is, whilst the Church shall continue) as long as the doxology, or glorification of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost together, (which was received in the Catholic Church in the very age that trod upon the heels of the Apostles, as appears from the testimony of St. Justin Martyr,\* and others) shall retain a place in the Liturgy and public offices of the Church: so long shall we not want a clear proof, and a practical evidence and demonstration, that the Deity of the Holy Ghost, and so the *consubstantiality* of each Person in the most blessed Trinity, is a Catholic verity.

\* Apolog. 2. p. 97, 98.

## EXTRACT

From HOOKER'S Eccles. Pol. B. V. Section 42. p.  
243. 245. 277. & Sect. 51. p. 259.

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### ON THE ATHANASIAN CREED,

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—Under Constantine the Emperour, about three hundred years and upward after Christ, Arius, a priest in the Church of Alexandria, became, through envy and stomach, prone unto contradiction, and bold to broach at the length that heresie, wherein the Deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, (contained, but not opened in the former Creed,) the coequality and coeternity of the Son with the Father, was denied. Being for this *impiety* deprived of his place by the Bishop of the same Church, the punishment, which should have reformed him, did but increase his obstinacy, and give him occasion of labouring with greater earnestness elsewhere, to intangle unwary minds with the snares of *his damnable opinion*.—Now, although these contentions were cause of much evil, yet some good the Church hath reaped by them, in that they occasioned the learned

and sound in faith to explain such things as Heresie went about to deprave. And *in this respect*, the Creed of ATHANASIUS, first exhibited unto Julius, Bishop of Rome ; and afterwards, (as we may probably gather) sent to the Emperor Jovinian, for his more full information concerning that truth, which Arianism so mightily did impugn; was both in the East and the West Churches accepted *as a treasure of inestimable price*, by as many as had not given up the very ghost of belief. Then was the Creed of Athanasius written, howbeit, not then so expedient to be publicly used, as now, in the Church of God.—That which heresie did, by sinister interpretations, go about to pervert in the first and most ancient Apostolical Creed, the same being by singular dexterity and plainness cleared from those heretical corruptions, (partly by the Creed of ATHANASIUS, written about the year 340, and partly by that other set down in the synod of Constantinople forty years after, comprehending together with the Nicene Creed, an addition of other articles,

which the Nicene Creed omitted, because the controversie then in hand, needed no mention to be made of them,) these *Catholic declarations* of our belief delivered by them, which were so much nearer than we are to the first publication thereof; and continuing needful for all men at all times to know; these confessions, as *testimonies of our continuance in the same faith* to this present day, we rather use, than any other gloss or paraphrase devised by ourselves, which, though it were to the same effect, notwithstanding could not be of the like authority and credit.—The very Creed of ATHANASIUS, and that sacred hymn of glory, than which nothing doth sound more heavenly in the ears of faithful men, are now reckoned as superfluities, which we must in any case pare away, lest we cloy God with too much service. Is there in that confession of faith any thing which doth not at all times edify and instruct the attentive hearer? or is our faith in the blessed Trinity a matter needless to be so oftentimes mentioned and opened in the principal part of that duty, which we

owe to God, our public prayer?—Albeit, conflict with Arians brought forth the occasion of writing that Creed, which long after was made a part of the Church liturgy, as hymns and sentences of glory were a part thereof before; yet cause sufficient there is, why both should remain in use, the one as *a most divine explication* of the chiefest articles of our Christian belief, the other as an heavenly acclamation of joyful applause to his praises, in whom we believe; neither the one nor the other unworthy to be heard sounding, as they are, in the Church of Christ, whether Arianism live or die.”

—“The Lord our God is one Lord. In which indivisible unity notwithstanding we adore the Father, as being altogether of himself; we glorifie that consubstantial Word, which is his Son; we bless and magnifie that co-essential Spirit, eternally proceeding from both, which is the Holy Spirit. Seeing therefore the Father is of none, the Son is of the Father, and the Spirit is of both, they are by these several properties really distinguishable each from other.”



## DISQUISITION

ON

RATIONAL CHRISTIANITY.\*

**T**O several learned and ingenious writers, some doctrines of the Christian religion have appeared so contradictory to all the principles of reason and equity, that they cannot assent to them, nor believe that they can be derived from the fountain of all truth and justice. In order therefore to satisfy themselves and others, who may labour under the same difficulties, they have undertaken the arduous task of reconciling revelation and reason; and great would have been their merits, had they begun at the right end, that is, had they endeavoured to

\* Disquisitions by Soame Jenyns, Esq. p. 101.

exalt the human understanding to the comprehension of the sublime doctrines of the Gospel, rather than to reduce those doctrines to the low standard of human reason ; but, unfortunately for themselves and many others, they have made choice of the latter method, and, as the shortest way to effect it, have with inconsiderate rashness expunged from the new Testament every divine declaration, which agrees not exactly with their own notions of truth and rectitude ; and this they have attempted by no other means, than by absurd explanations, or by bold assertions that they are not there,\* in direct contradiction to the sense of language, and the whole tenour of those writings ; as some philosophers have ventured, in opposition to all men's senses, and even to their

\* This has been the common practice of heresy in all ages. TERTULLIAN says of Marcion and Valentinus : *Alius manu scripturas, alius sensus explicatione intervertit.* (*De Præscript. c. 38.*) *Cum enim ex scripturis arguuntur, in accusationem convertuntur ipsarum scripturarum, quasi non recte habeant, neque sint ex autoritate.* (IRENÆUS L. iii. c. 2. ed. Grab.) EDIT.

own, to deny the existence of matter, for no other reason, but because they find in it properties which they are unable to account for. Thus they have reduced Christianity to a mere system of ethics, and retain no part of it but the moral, which in fact is no characteristic part of it at all, as this, though in a manner less perfect, makes a part of every religion which ever appeared in the world. This ingenious method of converting Christianity into Deism, cannot fail of acquiring many respectable proselytes ; for every virtuous and pious man, who would be a Christian if he could, that is, who reverences the name of Christianity but cannot assent to its tenets, is glad to list under the standard of any leader, who can teach him to be a Christian, without believing any one principle of that institution.

Whoever will look back into the theological annals of this country, will find, that during the last century, the fashionable philosophers were for the most part Atheists, who ascribed every thing to chance, fate,

or necessity ; exclusive of all intelligence or design. These mighty giants, who fought against Heaven, being at length overthrown by the absurdity of their own principles, and the superior abilities of their adversaries, retreated, about the beginning of the present, to the more tenable fort of Deism. But here again, being frequently worsted, they at last took shelter under the covert-way of *rational Christianity*, where they now make their stand, and attack revelation with less odium and more success, than from the open plains of professed Deism ; because many are ready to reject the whole substance of the Christian institution, who would be shocked at the thought of relinquishing the name.

If Christianity is to be learned out of the New Testament, and words have any meaning affixed to them, the fundamental principles of it are these :—That mankind come into this world in a depraved and fallen condition ;—that they are placed here for a while, to give them an opportunity to work out their salvation, that is, by a virtuous and

pious life to purge off this guilt and depravity, and recover their lost state of happiness and innocence, in a future life ;—that this they are unable to perform, without the grace and assistance of God ;—and that after their best endeavours, they cannot hope for pardon from their own merits, but only from the merits of Christ, and the atonement made for their transgressions by his sufferings and death. This is clearly the sum and substance of the Christian dispensation ; and so adverse is it to all the principles of human reason, that if brought before her tribunal, it must inevitably be condemned by so incompetent a judge. If we give no credit to its divine authority, any attempt to reconcile them [reason and revelation] is useless ; and, if we believe it, presumptuous\* in the highest degree. To prove the reasonableness of a revelation, is in fact to destroy it ;\* because a revelation implies in-

\*\* This appears to be much too strongly said. The resurrection of the body is purely a doctrine of Revelation, and could never have been discovered by unas-



formation of something which reason cannot discover, and therefore must be different from its deductions, or it would be no revelation. If God had told us, that we come into this world in a state of perfect innocence, void of all propensities to evil ; that our depravity proceeds entirely from the abuse of that free-will, with which he has been pleased to endue us ; that, if in this life we pursue a virtuous conduct, we have a right\* to be rewarded, and if a vicious, we may expect to be punished in another, except we prevent it by repentance and reformation, and that these are always in our own power†—if God had informed us of no-

sisted reason. Yet St. Paul shews from natural analogies, that it is not contrary to reason. EDIT.

\* Christ, indeed, says, “Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have *right* to the tree of life.” (Rev. xxii. 14.) But the pardon of our sins being altogether the consequence of Christ’s atonement, our right becomes so much a matter of grace, that we cannot properly apply it to ourselves. EDIT.

† By prayer ;—through the grace of God obtained by prayer. EDIT.

thing more, this would have been no revelation, because it is just what our reason, properly employed, might have taught us : but if he has thought proper, by supernatural means, to assure us, that our situation, our relations, our depravity, our merits, and our powers, are all of a kind extremely different from what we imagine ; and that his dispensations towards us are founded on principles which cannot be explained to us, because, in our present state, we are unable to comprehend them ; this is a revelation, which we may believe, or not, according to our opinion of its authority ; but let us not reason it into no revelation at all.

The writers of the New Testament frequently declare, that the religion which they teach, is a mystery, that is, a revelation of the dispensations of God to mankind, which without supernatural information we never could have discovered. Thus St. Paul says, “ Having made known to us the mystery of “ his will.” What then is this mystery ? not the moral precepts of the gospel ; for they

are no more a mystery than the *Ethics* of Aristotle, or the offices of Cicero. The mystery consists alone in these very doctrines, which the Rationalist explodes, because they disagree with the conclusions of his reason; that is, because they are mysteries, as they are avowed to be by those who taught them.

But these bold advocates for reason, understand not its extent, its powers, or the proper application of them. The utmost perfection of human reason, is the knowledge of its own defects, and the limits of its own confined powers, which are extremely narrow. It is a lamp which serves us very well for the common occupations of life, which are near at hand, but can shew us no prospect at a distance. On all speculative subjects, it is exceedingly fallacious, but in none so frequently misleads us, as in our religious and political inquiries; because, in the former, we draw conclusions without premises; and in the latter, upon false ones. Thus, for instance, reason tells us, that a Creator, infinitely powerful and good, could never

permit any evil, natural or moral, to have a place in his works ; because his goodness must induce him, and his power enable him, to exclude them. This argument is unanswerable by any thing, but experience, which every hour confutes it. Thus again, reason assures us, that sufferings, though they may be just punishments for past crimes, and a means to prevent them for the future, can never be compensations for them ; much less can the sufferings of one being atone for the guilt of another. Against this no objection can be urged, except the belief of mankind, in all ages and nations, and the express declarations of revelation ; which unanimously contradict it, and afford sufficient grounds for our concurrence. In these two instances we are deceived by misapplying our reason to subjects in which we have no premises to reason upon ; for, being totally ignorant on what plan the universal system is formed and supported, we can be no judges of what is good or evil with regard to the whole ; and, as we know not for

what ends either guilt or sufferings were ever admitted we must be unable to comprehend what connections between them may possibly be derived from those ends. In our political discussions, reason equally misleads us; in these, she presents us with schemes of government, in which, by the most admirable contrivances, justice is so impartially administered, property so well guarded, and liberty so effectually secured, that in theory it seems impossible, that any people under such wise regulations can possibly fail of being happy, virtuous, and free; but experiment soon convinces us, that they are inadequate to these salutary purposes, and that, in practice, they are productive only of anarchy and confusion. Here our errors arise from reasoning on false premises, that is, from supposing that mankind will act on principles incompatible with the vices, the follies, and the passions of human nature. If reason, therefore, is so fallible a judge in the little and low concerns of human policy, with which she is daily conversant,



how absurd is the Rationalist, who constitutes her sole arbiter in the discussions of the most sublime subjects, of which she has not the least comprehension, the attributes and dispensations of the Almighty, our relations to him, and our connections with past and future states of existence !

Of all men, who are called Christians, the Rationalist seems to have the least pretence to that denomination. The Church of England acknowledges the belief of all the doctrines of this institution in her Articles; —but the Rationalist reprobates the whole, as impious, ridiculous, and contradictory to the justice of God; and the reason of man. Nor is he less adverse to the spirit, than to the letter of this religion. The true Christian is humble, teachable, and diffident; the Rationalist is assuming, obstinate, and self-sufficient: the Christian hopeth all things, feareth all things, and believeth all things; the Rationalist hopeth for nothing, but from his own merits, feareth nothing from his own depravity, and believeth no-

thing, the grounds of which he cannot perfectly understand.—

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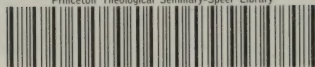
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